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**NOW ON VIEW**

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# NOW ON VIEW

BY  
IVOR BROWN



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## NOTE

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## THE SOCIAL SCENE

### I. A Future Farewell      ~      ~      ~

[*The following is an extract from an English journal of the nineteen-eighties, suggested by comments on the passing, in 1928, of the Tavistock Hotel in the Piazza of Covent Garden.*]

THE new atomic radiation house-breaking machines will be at work early to-day on the old Superb Hotel, that curious relic of the nineteen-twenties. The job will not take them long ; noon may see it finished. Superb ! Its very name is an irony, for the quaint little place had but a thousand bedrooms, only a single ice-rink, and not one arcade of shops. Up to the end the management refused to adapt the roof to aeroplanes or to the parachutes working with the gyroscopic flight-service, and maintained, with a humorous conservatism, that its patrons should go in by the door. Such obstinacy, however charming in mood, is fatal in fact, and the ' Superb ' must pay the price. There is no longer room in London for this tiny but tasteful relic of a vanished, leisurely, and graceful epoch.

The place appears to have been designed in November, 1928, and finished in January 1929,

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so slowly did they build then. There is an infinite allure, however, about many of its features. The glazed tiles and gilt scroll-work of the smaller dining-room are faultless examples of the craftsmanship of the period. Only two hundred and fifty tables were laid in this old-world nook. How cosy and intimate it all seems! References in the Press of the period show that it was held to be the last word in progressive construction and luxury. To us it seems merely crude—there was but a single bathroom to each bed and, up to 1950, no telephonoptical installation at each bedside—but its charm is there for those who have eyes and sensibility. The art-marble columns in the lounge are a perfect piece of Fifth-Georgian display work, and the plastic values in the design of the old Whizz-bang Bar are at once the symbol of Fifth-Georgian *bravura* and a model for the new school of architects who are seeking to recapture the admirable rococo of the Late Music-hall style.

What a fragrant and exquisite place the old bar must have been in its early days! One can picture those charming youths of the period slender as willows at the waist and then billowing rhythmically at the calves and ankles in the delicious trousers of the time, sipping their old-world concoctions of gin and talking in their high-pitched voices about the pleasures of the town. The bucks of the day were

## A Future Farewell

actually happy to travel at sixty miles an hour in their cars, and no doubt boasted over the bar about 'touching seventy'. There were still green fields left between London and Brighton, and poets would actually roam and rusticate in Sussex! Of that quaint period the vanishing 'Superb' is the last fragment. It is like losing an heirloom. When the art-marble columns perish this morning we shall know that Fifth-Georgian London, with all its flavour and fascination, has perished for ever.

The Whizz-bang Bar has, of course, been closed for forty years. When Prohibition came in and Englishmen began to drink swiftly and seriously, to loiter over such mild matters as the Martinis and Manhattans of the time was neither legal nor enjoyable. Nowadays we can snatch a capsule from our pocket and get four times the kick in a fortieth of the time, and many of us marvel at the dilatory drinking of diluted spirits which was the vogue when the Whizz-bang Bar was the rendezvous of the leisurely young grandees. But it must have been a notable spectacle. The girls, according to the old sketches and photographs, sat on high stools beside the men, and their almost primitive use of cosmetics must have given infinite colour to the scene. Indeed, England was a richly tinted country then, for it was the lovely period when ladies wore stockings as bright as the ties of their athletic partners and

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every golf course glittered with a rare flowering of colour when the players took the field. There was a coterie known as the Bright Young People, and they were rightly named. What a precious glimpse it would be to look back into the Whizz-bang Bar and see all the exquisites of that chromatic time planning their next adventures in the rough vehicles then in use and arranging some entertainment which contained the very spirit of romance !

True to the simplicity of their time, they borrowed their musical modes from primitive peoples. When the ' Superb ' had its triumphal opening no less than two hundred negroes manned the various orchestras, and the simple airs of swamp and forest issued from the massed saxophones. It was in the ' Superb ' that the last human being to play a musical instrument sounded the finale to what is now considered an intolerable waste of labour. Not till 1955 did the ' Superb ', dilatory as ever, join the Mechanical Musical Combine which conquered London in the forties, and have its music laid on to every room with the central heating. It is hard now to imagine a gala night at the ' Superb ', when the quality of the town would dance the charming knock-kneed measures of the time and clap their hands applaudingly to the grinning darkies who occupied the platform of the Baronial Ballroom (that inimitable piece of Fifth-Georgian craftsmanship) and



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extracted their mournful but engaging rhythms from the odd tubes in front of them. That the wealthy and educated classes gave such a welcome to the folk-melodies of the least sophisticated races and would dance their simple shuffles is a remarkable tribute to the cosmopolitan culture and hospitable delicacy of the time. We may smile now at the pretensions of the poor little 'Superb' to be an hotel. Its service must have been a mockery of all that the word service has come to mean. The place seems to us to have been little more than a rough tavern as far as its amenities were concerned. But who can deny that it was aromatic and that the house-breakers will be destroying a chalice which held all the perfumes of London life at its rarest and most refined ?

During the thirties one section of the Whizzbang Bar was known as Poets' Corner. Outside would be peace—not an aeroplane stirring, and only the quiet rumble of the motor-buses. Inside were the wits, sitting with those gentle blends of alcohol which would seem to us, who have known Prohibition, to be the meekest of brews. It was there, in the old 'Superb' (Professor Groober has located the great occasion beyond a doubt), that Rupert Stabb met Sigismund Stark and founded the Gallio Group, with its audacious policy of not caring. 'We care neither for rhyme nor reason,' cried Sigismund to a reporter whom he had just

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summoned by telephone. The group frequently met in the 'Superb', and there composed the historic First Processional with its plangent refrain of

Fish,  
Fish,  
Poor fish,  
Fish.

Some, it is true, of their succeeding odes had less emotional content, but it would be difficult to calculate their effect on the course of English poetry.

Such was the old 'Superb', a flawless collector's piece for those who would retain the essences of English life. The echoes of the Fifth-Georgian gaiety will now be stilled by the remorseless thud of the destroying machinery, but something, surely, has escaped into the air of London and taken refuge in the consciousness of the understanding citizen. Those of us who are not ashamed to be thought old fogies will long regret the disappearance of that pedimented façade and the storied richness of the Baronial Ballroom. We ourselves jostled for relics of the Whizz-bang Bar at the sale a few weeks ago, and we can envy the taste as well as the purse of the American millionaire who secured at enormous cost the last of the 'Superb's' saxophones and is sending it home to join his first editions of Stark and Stabb. Another temple has gone. Peace to its dust.

## II. 'Ye Newe'    ♪    ♪    ♪    ♪

THE 'Sir Toby' is not one of those hotels which have got some precise date on the brain or, to be more accurate, on the bedclothes, silver, note-paper, and luggage labels. Americans may come to our town, but neither cutlery nor cuspidor reiterates for their benefit any tedious or dubious assertion about a foundation in 1423 or 1571. But if the 'Toby', to give it the local name, is vague about the date of its conception, it is demonstratively certain about the period of its jocund youth. Not all the Yeomen of the Guard, leading captive bears to the pit, chanting madrigals to melodies of Mr. Byrd, and brandishing cakes in the one hand and ale in the other, could approach that quintessence of Tudorism implicit in the 'Toby' after the True Tavern Syndicate had rescued it from Victorian frowsiness and a decorative scheme in which the lace of Nottingham and the art of Miss Maud Goodman were predominant partners. The Syndicate installed as their representative a gentleman cordially referred to in our city's *Argus* as 'popular Ferdy Cohen'. Ferdy, in his new office of Mine Hoste, promptly showed that what he did not know about ingle-nooks and half-timbering was not to be found in the columns

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of the *Hotel-keepers' Mercury*, or in that invaluable guide to commercial architecture *Olde Homes for Newe*. Ferdy gathered that the faces of houses, as of ladies, can tolerate a deal of judicious treatment and of superficial reconstruction.

Travellers with an open eye are well aware nowadays that '*Tudor omnia vincit*'. Some, it is true, of our stately homes and hostels were actually born Tudor, but the greater number have had Tudor thrust upon them. Even the tram-taking townsman going bowler-hatted to his desk or counter can watch a seemly Victorian tavern, once decent in its brick or stucco, in process of having its face lifted by the specialists in period surgery until it is adorned in a new Tudor skin with wrinkles of oak and great black gables for eyebrows which impishly suggest Mr. George Robey impersonating Drake or Raleigh and make it perfectly plain that the house is destined only for boys of the Mermaid breed, saucy with sack and hot with oaths and sonnets. To give our 'Toby' its due, it scarcely needed such drastic manipulation. It was a natural ancient whose antiquity only required to be elicited and underlined. Tudor it might easily achieve without the more violent technique of thrusting-on. To the work of hinting and underlining the popular Ferdy applied himself with his customary energy and imagination. Two

## ‘ Ye Newe ’

grooms in kersey doublets were ready to hand the art-silken ladies from their Clynos, Cowleys, and other equivalents of coach and palfrey, and when they were shown into the lounge they were immediately faced with Ferdy's greatest triumph over time, ‘ Ye Olde Cocke-taile Nooke ’.

Within the nook stood a Beefeater and many bottles. Around and above it were graven the garnishings of a true Shakesperian culture and of a devout application to the estimable concordance of Mrs. Cowden-Clarke. Here one reads ‘ Gins to bite the spirits ’ (*Tempest*, iii, 3), and there ‘ Shake off one to take another ’ (*Winter's Tale*, iv, 3). But the mural exhortation to short drinks was as nothing to the similar praise of potations pottle deep. Tankards were festooned about the walls of the lounge, and every inge had now its bunch of beakers where once Miss Goodman reigned. A general invocation to revelry bestrode the fire-place like a caption, and the necessity for cakes and ale was hammered home upon the walls with a costly display of the finest art-lettering. No jutty frieze, buttress, nor coign of vantage but Ferdy had turned it to purposes of poetry or pewter. The lounge, after his researches, outflamed the barge of Cleopatra in its blazonry of Bacchic exhortation and suggested that our city could hold a bottle to Elsinore in ‘ heavy-headed revel, east and west ’.

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Never was England older or merrier or beerier than amid the chintz and *Tatlers* of the 'Toby' lounge ; never, at least, until you started to cry for ale and canakin's clink.

It was then that Ferdy's system struck one as more calculating than kindly. To order draught beer in the lounge of the 'Toby' was to order the forbidden thing. Your pitiful misconception of the situation would be pointed out by a severe Malvolio. 'Only wines, spirits, and bottled beers are served here,' he would inform you, not proceeding, however, to ram home explicitly into your plebeian head that chintz will only tolerate tankards on the wall and ale in art-lettering, and that there is an exception in favour of bottled beer because the profits thereon are usually four times as large as those derivable from drawn pints. If your courage had not failed altogether and you pursued the point of the pint-pot with Malvolio he would frowningly drive you out of the lounge and away from all its pottle-poesy into a bleak bar, whither the base mechanicals came in from the street. Here the walls carried no vinous incitements, but many vigorous warnings. You were forbidden to spit, to swear, or to gamble, and, thus admonished, you might drink a pint administered by a man with no Elizabethan pretensions and a happy memory of having made ten shillings on a horse called Shakespeare 'over the sticks'.

## ‘ Ye Newe ’

The lounge, I hear, is now always crowded. A radio set has been put over against the Cocke-taile Nooke. Industrious Shakespearians have inscribed above it, ‘ This isle is full of noises ’, and a varlet in Elizabethan livery modulates the flow of mirth and music. Malvolio has got the situation well in hand, and for some weeks now nobody has been known to profane the Tudor solemnities by crying out for a can of beer. The Syndicate is looking out for another historic house to save, and Ferdy, I am sure, will be a captain of ingenuity in all such works of piety and salvage. It is said that he is making a national reputation as a zealot for the past and will broadcast next week upon ‘ Hotels as a heritage. Why we must hold fast to our legacy of loveliness ’. And why should he not ? He knows, he knows.

### III. The Labour-Savers

IT was an unwritten law of our grandparents that a well-conducted young couple should invest an eighth of its income annually in the Funds with an eye to rainy days, ships that fail to come home, sons' 'prentice-money, daughters' portions, and the like. The young couples of to-day have this labour saved for them. Since State and borough between them claim about a third of what income there is, the ardours and endurances of 'putting by' have become a negligible excitement: young husbands no longer look their bank managers proudly in the face as they consign another hundred pounds to the purchase of the Four-per-cents; rather do they slink away furtively in tragic inability either to lend or borrow when one of these potentates has brusquely refused them the further facilities of our great credit system. But those who cannot save money are not to be denied some participation in the saving graces. If not funds, why not labour? And if one saves labour, surely one saves money too. The argument is irresistible. When supported by the suave propaganda of the philanthropists who organized our local Happy Homes Festival it swept every brisk young housewife to the



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exhibition. At this they collected so many free samples that they all had to travel home by taxi and tip the dustman at the end of the week to remove the extra rubbish.

My keen-witted neighbour Mrs. Byng-Barlow was a particularly active convert to labour-saving. She railed at me over the palings for my failure to attend the exhibition. 'I've just read four columns about it in the papers,' she said. 'Then why go?' I answered. 'Surely half the boon and blessing of the newspaper is that it stops one going to see things.' Of course Mrs. Byng-Barlow thought me perverse and cynical. I fancy Byng-Barlow agreed with me, and when I saw him next evening he had come round completely to my way of thinking. His wife had returned in a taxi laden with hardware of every description; her equipage had become a vast entanglement of 'gadgets', and her leaving of it reminded me of nothing so much as of Mr. Harry Tate, who enters the stage entirely enmeshed in coils of wire. 'What's that, papa?' asks his lad. 'Wireless,' snaps the entangled father. So did Mrs. Byng-Barlow begin to save labour.

Her husband ricked his back quite severely in getting the more formidable chunks of machinery up the front steps. The taxi-driver, requested to lend a hand, observed that he wasn't a coolie, and that he wasn't going to blackleg on the steam-crane workers. I had to

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assist, naturally. Mrs. Byng-Barlow was affable and enthusiastic, and started to ring up the various plumbers, electricians, and technicians who would be needed to instal the plant. Then Byng-Barlow insisted peevishly on her summoning the doctor.

I need not trouble you with the subsequent history of that household except in barest outline. Three maids gave notice in succession for the somewhat paradoxical reason that they were forbidden to wash up; there was the machine waiting to save their labour. The maids' view apparently was that if their labour was not wanted they would take it elsewhere. Anyhow, they were not going to learn how to wash up with a text-book and a diagram. Plumbers and electricians attended the house in droves, and the place was resonant with the hum of busy toil. Byng-Barlow hates all machinery and would send out for aid to fix a gas-mantle or a globe. The local labour market experienced something of a boom just after the labour-saving exhibition in our town.

One day I saw a vanman delivering common mops and brushes next door, and a maid with smiling face accepting them. Byng-Barlow came home quite animated that day. I knew the game was up. The noises stopped. The electricians and plumbers dwindled; I hope, for their sakes, that they have followed the Happy Homes Festival on tour, as a sort of

## The Labour-Savers

salvage party of the new domesticity. They should accumulate, too, a retinue of cleaners and greasers.

But Mrs. Byng-Barlow had one last card to play. That was her new picnic-hamper, complete with maps, plans, indices, and a book of the words. It contained, according to the booklet, 'a hundred pic-knick-knacks', and enabled you to 'lunch on the seashore as you would at the Savoy'. It shone with silver and it swelled visibly with 'gadgets'. It guaranteed a perfect omelet on the mountain-crest and a perfect cutlet in the Great Open Spaces. And all without labour. It was inevitable that Mrs. Byng-Barlow should celebrate the arrival of sunshine by summoning a picnic, which was to be a labour-saving triumph, a feast not made with hands.

We paraded about a dozen strong at the station and took train. I remember noting that there were quite a number of active girls with livid stockings and brogues whose tongues cascaded about the platform. But of men there were only Byng-Barlow, myself, and two youths who were coming by motor-cycle. When the train reached our stopping-place the brisk young women plunged away towards the moors. The motor-cyclists had not appeared. Byng-Barlow and I looked at each other and the hamper. There was nothing for it but to shoulder the burden and follow. It contained

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a hundred pic-knick-knacks and food and drink for twelve. Mrs. Byng-Barlow was sweeping onwards with her company under the blazing sun.

We lugged the thing like a portmanteau for an hour and then gave in; the women came back reproachfully, as to the puniest of earthlings. 'We've carried,' grunted Byng-Barlow. 'You can cook. There's no labour involved.' So they set to work, sorting out the labour-saving devices and opening a hundred pic-knick-knacks to find the salt. The sky clouded over within an hour, and the rain, good moorland rain, set in. Luckily we had all carried a macintosh of sorts. *Sic vos non vobis*. There was something greater than ourselves to consider. 'Machinery first', is the chivalrous motto of the new civilization. Mrs. Byng-Barlow pointed out that it would all get wet and rusted. So with walking-sticks and coats we built a wigwam with room for the hamper and one cook. On these occasions where your heart is there will your macintosh be also. But mountain rain is no respecter of such amateurish wigwams, and a drenched pot never boils.

The train journey home gave amusement to some strangers. In a rain-swept waiting-room ten sodden wanderers were busy scouring labour-saving devices to the number of a hundred, so that not one of them should be

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rusted. Somebody tried a joke about a new exhibition of temper-saving utensils, but it wasn't a success. Mrs. Byng-Barlow became very bright, however, as the hardware began to glisten under our attention. 'It won't have done the hamper any harm,' she said. So successful was our work that I believe it fetched quite a good price second-hand.

#### IV. Joy Moves On      ~      ~      ~

CLUB-LIFE, we know, is in a bad way. The leather arm-chairs which so infuriated Mr. George Moore are empty at nights. A few members show nocturnal punctuality, but they keep their regular hours in the bridge-room only. Bridge may be a delight, but it is also a discipline. Its devotees, like the criminal, must sit in solemn silence until the money changes hands and the occasional argument begins. Bridge isn't for that withering class of the music-hall epoch, the 'johnnies' and 'mashers', the men who drop in.

Dropping-in is a custom doomed in a highly powered, highly organized world. The 'Empire' in Leicester Square, now reconstructed as a super-kinema, was the temple of the droppers-in. The decision at the last minute, the casual entry, are moribund habits. Even the conquering kinema, which began by making dropping-in safe for democracy, has become a routine place where you book seats to see a special film at a special time. The 'Empire' used to advertise itself, with a generous redundancy, as 'the cosmopolitan club of the world'. It had its patrons who took stalls for Genée or whoever was queen of the dance. But its strength lay with the gilded waifs and strays

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of the night, the men with cigars but no particular destination—the people who didn't book seats and have time-table evenings. Long ago it felt the pinch like the clubs, because the droppers-in had dropped out. It took to housing Shakespeare with plentiful matinées for school-parties. It couldn't endure after that sort of thing.

The decline of the music-hall has been attributed to the decline of the music-hall artist. There is not much in the argument. The artists are there, old and young, if you care to look for them. Demand would easily renew and re-create supply. It is the public that has changed its spots. When it wants to see dancing it wants more than a strolling view of a ballet sandwiched in among music-hall turns. It goes with determination to M. Diaghileff for a whole evening and must book its seat to do so. The Compton Mackenzie young men who once hung delicately about the 'Orient' have no such casual carnival nowadays. Their successors go to the Russians like purposeful pilgrims, punctually, regularly, with zeal for the art, and no second intentions. And their mothers go too.

That, of course, is the real change which has unloosed the baroque pillars of the 'johnnie' world. People are still emptily talking about the break-up of the family when the truth is that the family has broken up all the detachment

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of the club-men and their kind. So the passing of the 'Empire' after the 'Oxford' and the 'Tivoli,' is simply another surrender to the woman-about-town who wants a different kind of entertainment. Considerations of decorum kept ladies out of the old music-hall, but they would not have liked it had they been there. Its humours were of the gusty, elemental kind which women do not care about, which is proved by their general distaste for Dickens, and the fact that Falstaff is never a money-maker on the stage except in his feeble Windsor adventure, when the virtue has gone forth. When the women did come into the music-hall they changed the bill. And now they are changing the halls themselves into tea-shops and kinemas or dancing-places. There is nothing now which cannot claim to be a family entertainment.

Another great change is our increased capacity to amuse ourselves. Far more people want to dance themselves than to see others dance, and the young men, who might have been dropping in somewhere in the West End, are scheduled as partners, wanted here, there, and everywhere. We are certainly more active than our sires—contemptuous of their puffiness, and as nervous of a paunch as of death itself. Casual visitation of 'cosmopolitan clubs of the world' was not a strenuous matter. But vigorous young men to-day appear to be



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disdainful of such languors. In winter they are dancing, in summer they are off in their cars, with an evening game of golf or tennis at the end of the dash. So Joy moves on, at forty miles an hour, and in fresh air. What has become of the medical student whose evening was spent on the two-bob 'upper deck' at the 'Oxford'? He has probably joined the ladies at a gramophone or loud-speaker dance, or perhaps he has turned actor himself and is being vastly medieval in a little play of St. Francis.

When the chaperons were strangled in the last yard of trailing skirt, when jokes about seeing women's ankles lost their last shade of shabby meaning, the frowsty, self-conscious hedonism of the swagger music-hall became ridiculous. There ceased to be anything dashing about that seat in the front row, since if a rural panorama was the objective, a garden-party at the vicar's in 1927 would yield more satisfaction than the naughtiest *divertissement* of the eighteen-nineties. For the sons of Belial there could be no dazzle in a music-hall night if they might discover their uncles and their aunts there, seated and enraptured by a musical quartet. When the entirely respectable young woman next door began to tire herself so much more like a ballet-girl than any ballet-girl would, what was the point of wasting flowers and sweets on some fatigued young

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stage professional who was a member of her union and only wanted to get on with her job ? When the skirts grew shorter and the rouge grew thicker in Acacia Avenue, there ceased to be anything strange about stage-doors, and Romance took a mortal chill in those drab and draughty places.

There has followed the night-club, an ascetic place where the energetic do musical drill. Mr. A. P. Herbert has observed that modern night-clubs are the spas of our gay Methuselahs, and the poet speaks truth. The jazzing bald-pate, frisking about with a niece who has removed almost as much hair on purpose as he has lost by accident, assures us truthfully that it does him good. He is no doddering hedonist who has trickled out of a Restoration comedy, but a pursuer of that earthly paradise in which threescore years and ten are no bar to a round of golf, a dance at night, and an appetite for more in the morning. Thirty years ago he may have enjoyed his cosmopolitan clubs of the world and the company of the knowing men with big cigars and tilted opera-hats. But that party has been broken up. What with motor-cars that hustle them into the wind on Walton Heath and wives and daughters who will permit nobody to sit still and get comfortably stout, that sedentary carnival of dropping in and lounging about has been wound up. Or at least as a masculine

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pastime it is no longer available, since Methuselah's wife must go a-gadding too. In the new social geography the sea-coast of Bohemia is a remarkably wide area, empty of adventure and dense in population. Above all, the air is clearer than it used to be and far more bracing. Joy moves on, but not so swiftly or so selfishly as to leave the very old and very young behind. Ours is a generation in which there is no preserving of pleasures and pastimes. A specialized raffishness for men about town has no chance when daughters all have latchkeys and Jack's as good a motorist as his master. After that Leicester Square must be made safe for suburbia ; it is decreed.

## V. All Boys Together

MIDSUMMER is high season for that constant and convivial section of the English people, the Rejuvenist Party. Schools have their days which are named by the speeches and honoured for the strawberries. Grey heads and bald rediscover the hospitality of University colleges. Young men, who are also old soldiers, collect nightly in the more portentous restaurants to cultivate memories over a fifteen-shilling dinner, with wine extra. The Oxford and Cambridge cricket match marks the crest of the wave. The clans gather in all their abundance and the manufacturers of white waistcoats, the merchants of grandiose cigars and the caterers who import champagne at six shillings a bottle and retail it at twenty-five thank all their gods for the flourishing existence of the corporate spirit. It is not an ill moment for these musters. The diet-sheet of Britain is at its best when June burns away into July. It is true that on the first day of the latter the forces of Inland Revenue renew their wolfish appetite, and the morning after the feast has its yellow envelope to cool the ardours of the time. But the Englishman is now inured to being taxed out of existence ; he sighs, and so, no doubt, do his other creditors, less pressing

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and less powerful than the State. Then, having mourned a moment for a bank balance that is totally incurable, he remembers that to-night he will be among the Old Thingumabobs, to-morrow battling beside familiar trees.

These manifestations of the corporate spirit are delicate, dangerous matters. Superior persons avoid them, and often they are justly cautious. The drinking of champagne is no prophylactic against the subsequent spouting of insufferable cant. The bore unquenchable can claim these occasions as his own, and the rhetoric of complacency makes many a reunion rankle in the memory. The schoolroom which echoes with the timidly acted scenes from Molière and Aristophanes and resounds once more with ethical exhortations in terms of sporting metaphor is a morning's prison-house, but there is better to come. The Englishman evidently has a taste for the quest of his youth, and when discerning people join the hunt the job can be decently executed. It is a nice courage that will attend the meet. Cynicism is far easier and costs nothing.

The most difficult congregations are those in which continuity has been most broken. We have gone out into different corners of the market-place so that the situation cannot be met by lavish talking of 'shop'. We are in doubt about our neighbours. Some show a strangely naked scalp; others a baffling

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extension of girth. We make diffident inquiries and feel ashamed by the answers. Todgers, for whom matriculation was an almost mortal effort, controls the destinies of a million and gives the law to lesser breeds. The scholarship man is penuriously teaching others to be scholars. How is he to approach the mighty men of Empire ? ' With familiarity ' is the natural answer. Let him wait ; after dinner it will be easier. And so it turns out. Time is not the only leveller.

Reunion is an art of which the Englishman is a fair practitioner. English women may learn it, but they do not appear to be keen students as yet. That women have no friends but only rivals is a silly sneer, but it is true that they shun corporate celebrations. Their friendships are individual, and their conversation too closely personal to stand the challenge of large gatherings. But this legacy of domestic seclusion must ultimately vanish as the seclusion itself vanishes. It has always seemed to me a shattering criticism of the feminist claims that when women found a club they immediately admit men, whereas men's clubs rarely admit women. The retort that this shows a larger view is of no avail. Bisexual clubs are dreadful places where women are continually remembering their sex and men cannot forget their troubles. There is too much prattle and too little peace. Women, perhaps, are still

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influenced by the jokes in old farces, and think that when men go to the club they are opening the doors of debauchery. But if women would only use their eyes when they pass the solemn windows of Pall Mall and Piccadilly they would realize that a clubman's ambition is to find a spot where it is not bad manners to sleep in public. I am sure that no woman ever dozes in a club arm-chair. She is too regardful of other eyes ; too respectful of the institution. Therefore she is not good at easy acquaintance nor likely to enjoy reunionism. ' Gaudeamus ' is not a song for the self-conscious. How can humanity revel when it is plagued with doubts about its dress ?

That is one reason why women should insist on a uniform evening-dress. This uniform need not be worn always, but it should be obligatory on formal occasions. Men may be painfully perplexed as to the choice between ' tails ' and dinner-jacket when no hint has been given, but they should realize that women are always in this position of wondering whether they have suited the dress to the occasion. A uniform is the solvent of such distress. It is surely far easier to achieve a common ease of manner when there is a common clothing of the uneasy guests, and thus no opportunity for envy or regret. The result would be a duller spectacle, but there are many other chances for display. The business of a reunion

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is simply to reunite, and that is difficult enough when there is a great diversity of persons and aptitudes, and large gaps in the acquaintances which are to be bridged again. What may begin as nervous work is infinitely more difficult if apprehensions about appearance are added to apprehensions about what to say and whom to greet. Man's evening-dress is ugly and uncomfortable, but it is a uniform, and so it helps.

I suspect that Englishmen can carry off the potentially sentimental occasion better than most. Their stiffness is here their prop, preventing the collapse into an emotional debauch. It is unfair to judge a nation by its plays, but I could not help feeling after a visit to 'Old Heidelberg' that a gathering of such youngsters forty years on would be a dreadful affair. Would not the waters of Neckar be treacled o'er and the beer be all diluted by the dew of tears? The United States, we know, are not to be judged by Mr. Babbitt only. None the less, Mr. Mencken's *Americana* does make one tremble before the presence of transatlantic reunionism.

At a rousing banquet of Hoo-Hoo, held at Grand Rapids last week, the rafters one moment were ringing with the strains of 'Sweet Adeline' and 'Lil' Liza Jane', and then—

Some one arose and said simply, 'I think we should all stand in memory of our former President, Woodrow



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Wilson.' The two hundred or more present arose as one. Then a cry, 'Face the Flag!' came from the rear of the room. All turned towards the large banner draped behind the speaker's table, and, moved by a single impulse, joined in singing the National Anthem.

Let us leave it at that, remembering that America, including Hoo-Hoo, enjoys Prohibition: it is a sobering thought, and reassuring for those of us who have just been wondering whether Britons can decently reunite.

## VI. Another Chance for Adam



A SERMON preached recently by the Bishop of Birmingham in Westminster Abbey was widely and naturally quoted. It was a vigorous reply to the suggestion that we should put science to sleep for ten years and a comprehensive invitation to the Church to regard the Darwinians as the best of friends. Dr. Barnes, it seems, is fully ready to wipe Eden off the map and to regard man's first disobedience not as the collapse of an innocent but as the custom of a hardened criminal. It is not my intention to become entangled in a debate of dogma or a squabble of the sects. But, as an amateur of moral and political philosophy, I cannot help seeing a certain irony in the present situation. For the Bishop, with all his passion for being up to date, is bowing his knee to a science which is as old-fashioned as polkas and pony-carts. He heroically throws over more and more of the Old Testament in order to make room for the New Learning. Yet if he was appealing to learning which is really new instead of to stale Victorian bulls, the first thing which the professors might do would be to demand the salvage of the rejected myths and to say a kindly word for poor old Paradise. The Bishop, in short, is in such a hurry to be

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modern that he has not stopped to find out what the moderns are saying.

The matter can be approached from three aspects. On theological and biological grounds I respectfully leave it alone, merely calling the Bishop's attention to the preface to *Back to Methuselah* as an anatomy of Darwinian melancholy which can hardly be overlooked. Anthropology is the third way of approach, and it is also the way that I, for one, find most interesting. Now, the anthropology which is really modern does not swallow without chewing; it does not accept the Victorian pronouncements about man's loathsome infancy of strife and blood. It accepts the term 'evolution', but it also stops to ask what the term means. It certainly believes that man has grown from the ape and altered and made institutions and conquests and colonies, but it does not believe that he has steadily pushed upwards from mud to morality, and it would not complacently congratulate the plutocrat that he is not as his swinish brother in the bush or amid the ice-floes. It sees the facts of growth and degeneration, of horizontal as well as of vertical movements, of social falls as well as of social rises. It studies the tremendous bearing of human institutions on human nature, and is convinced that the progress of society is not half so simple as the Darwinian law-givers pretended. Finally it

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would not immediately agree with the Bishop when he tells us that

Biological inquiry has definitely established that much that is evil in man's passions and appetites is due to natural instincts inherited from his animal ancestors. In fact, man is not a being who has fallen from an ideal state of perfect innocence ; he is an animal slowly gaining spiritual understanding and with the gain rising far above his spiritual ancestors.

It might, I think, turn round and tell the Bishop not to be so contemptuous of his own religion, since Eden is not such a silly idea as he thinks it, and Shelley may well have been more scientific than Herbert Spencer.

There is a common human tradition of the Golden Age. This glimpse of an old security, a languished liberty, and a primitive peace without possessions is part of universal folklore. Furthermore, it has its modern counterpart in the general and seemingly indestructible belief that man is better than his institutions would make him seem or will allow him to be. One need not be consciously and conscientiously the philosophic anarchist in order to feel that the man we casually meet is a kindlier, wiser, and more valuable person than the same individual when he is in uniform or brandishing a trade union card. We prefer the parson out of his canonicals, away from the mechanics of edification ; we like the soldier in his slippers ;

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we can agree with the organized worker, be he docker or doctor, when he is not being craft-conscious and proving the inflatory powers of authority. Sentimentalities about the human touch, vague chatter about the real man are something worth; they are the vestiges of man's repressed, discouraged, but abiding trust in a life without chains.

In modern times the Golden Age has been caught between two armies of attack: the noble savage in his paradise has been violently enfiladed. Christianity, having made Eden the myth and original sin the fact, tried to accommodate itself to neo-Darwinian anthropology with its picture of trial by struggle, the better man winning. One says 'better' with a purpose, since, 'better' has been so viciously confused with 'fitter'. Fitness is a relative term, and meaningless unless the question 'Fit for what?' is answered. The man who had an iron weapon was fitter to survive than the man with a weapon of flint or bronze. But what if the flint-man was not only badly armed but no soldier at all? What if war had never come his way? Archaeology, with neo-Darwinian preconceptions, would turn the missing link into a Martian and fill Paradise with the skulls of the slaughtered and the rude armament of those who killed. It sees the caveman as a mixture of Cain and Ishmael. Civilization, then, swims painfully towards us

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through a sea of blood. In that case the beach from which it started can hardly have been a golden strand.

But neo-Darwinism is not having a peaceable time at the moment. Its fitness to survive is being forcibly tested. Mr. Shaw has hammered it with the clearest dialectical method and the most forcible English prose of our time. On the anthropological side the researches of Professor Elliot Smith and Mr. W. J. Perry are causing grave pain to the school of orthodoxy, which sees humanity as it sees Nature, 'red in tooth and claws'. Now, an apprentice to this rebellion, Mr. H. J. Massingham, in his book on *Downland Man*, has held an analysis of the origins of war, at which assize primitive man leaves the dock without a stain on his character.

It is not easy to condense the argument, but it is worth attempting. Orthodoxy maintains that the megalithic culture, whose English capital was on the Wiltshire Downs, with branches wherever there were attractive metals and flints, sprang up spontaneously all over the world. The diffusionists point to the amazing similarities of the culture wherever it appears and trace it all back to colonization from Egypt and Crete. This colonization was a slow process, lasting for at least a thousand years, but the civilization for which it stood was filtered through Europe and Asia, weakening

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and degenerating as it went farther from its Mediterranean bases. Its strength was its knowledge of agriculture and of working minerals. To begin with, it was unmilitarized, and needed no defence because the men whose countries it entered were also innocent of war and its weapons. As far as we know the paleolithic man (the 'caveman' of popular superstition) had no weapons of war, and the bronze sword only develops slowly from the Bronze Age dagger. The tremendous scope of the work undertaken by the megalithic men in all their habitations suggests security and peace. But corruption was coming. It came first in Egypt, where the religion of the sun became a cult of black mysteries. The sky darkened for man. Metals were no longer sought for their magical properties or domestic and artistic uses. Gold became an end, not a means, and the acquisitive society was in foundation. War came with property, slavery with war, human sacrifice with both. Religion faded into priestcraft. Molochs of Church and State ground down the individual. Degeneracy moved like a slow fever across the body of a great civilization. And so in England. The works of the megalithic men grew weaker. The sword was in the barrow, and a community that had lost its spring fell before the leap of its own turbulent children. Degeneracy had won. War was established ; it was the product

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not of original sin but of human institutions, of class systems, and of the acquisitive society.

So brief a summary inevitably does injustice to the argument; inevitably, too, it misses out the evidence with which Mr. Massingham's book is stoutly fortified, if one may apply so military a metaphor to a work whose main objective is the acquittal of basic humanity from the War God's stain. The author will certainly have to stand fire from every quarter. Neo-Darwinians will pelt him from one side and Christians from the other, and rarely, it may be said, has an author walked more provocatively before the guns. Even the Socialists, who should appreciate the attribution of war to artificial systems instead of to the natural man and his original sin, will be vexed by the libertarian criticisms of authority. Specialists of every kind will start to wrangle over the minutiae of the evidence. Plain men, however, should find it one of the most exciting books of history ever written. Under Mr. Massingham's touch archaeology rises out of its dry dust with a light in its eyes and a challenge on its lips. From the flints of the Downland men he has kindled a flame which lights up the past in a way that would make any man take notice.

The thesis of original virtue, at least in the sense of spontaneous peacefulness and tolerant, nomadic life, fits in with the instincts of



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mankind. Men do not hate unless powers and prizes drive them to it. Jealousy and the occasional blow are natural enough ; it is with organization that the real horror begins. Possession of man's soul by the priest and of his body by the prince—that was the fall of man. Taboos for the mind and chains for the limbs follow after. So there is an *a priori* likeliness that the caveman was a happy, harmless creature ; we know for certain that he was an artist, and the more evidence we scrape together the less terrible a fellow does he seem. The first culture to succeed his reached its apex of achievement when it had the virtues of organization without its vices. Then the vices won, and Egypt and Crete went down before their own abuse of their powers. The chronicle of the cultures is no gramophone record dinning 'Excelsior' into our ears. It is a chant of rising and falling values. First an Athens climbs, leaving its Sparta far behind. But the Spartan vice eats into Attic virtue, and Sparta brings both down into the darkness of degenerate ruin. So the rhythm runs. That is the scoring on the outline of history. Now, a similar rhythm is suggested for pre-history's outline too. In many ways it is likely. In many ways it is comfortable doctrine. If we believe at all in heredity it is nice to set the noble savage as well as the warring tribesman and the greedy merchant on the family

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tree. If we believe at all in the dignity of man, it is good to hold that a modern State, armed, brawling, and acquisitive, is not an inevitable growth of the human spirit but a perversion of what was ours in the past and a travesty of what is ours to become.

Mr. Massingham traces the myth of the Golden Age from Hesiod and Ovid to Rousseau and Shelley. The basis of the myth is the concept of original virtue, which is a far more Christian doctrine than is that of original sin. The men of science from Descartes to Darwin have continually tried to shackle this unquenchable optimism of the individual in deadening laws of social growth. The irony lies in the turn of the situation. Anthropology, which during the last century was continually buffeting the naughty old Adam with the club-law of its own invention, has brought Adam into court instead of sending him down unheard. The true caveman is sought for 'in Siberian tundras, in pockets of North America, in strips of the Arctic regions, in the jungles of South-western Asia, in a few islands of the Pacific', and so forth. Mr. Massingham brings a score of scientific witnesses into the box, and with one accord they speak up for the meek and merry disposition of old Adam. He is nearest to the brute, but he is no match in brutality for man of the metal, much less of the machine, age. He has never sacrificed himself to property

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or principality. When he began to discover some good things, he began to lose others. He rose and fell, developed and decayed. He smothered his natural self under unnatural laws. This is not merely the bleating of bards, it is the conclusion of science. Accordingly, before the Bishop of Birmingham has finally razed all the orchards of Eden to the ground, he might give Adam the right to appeal. The poor man had rough justice from Heaven and from science he has had even less consideration. Let him have another chance. It is science, not superstition, which insists.

## VII. Spring Song



FOR the majority of people to-day the routine of life varies little and the timetable is a king whose writ runs without challenge or collapse. For them the daily round is made on rails, and there is nothing so surprising as a surprise. Should they fret under this orderly dispensation, vote certainty inglorious, and mutter against the tyranny of the expected which always happens, Easter must seem to be the most delectable of the public holidays. Its date is fixed in variety, and the authority which determines it is the visiting moon. This lunar control is under criticism, and no doubt Parliament will soon assert the right of man to put the slippery festival under restraint. But Easter is still movable in a world where so much is rigid, and when we add the inconstancy of our insular weather to the versatile possibilities of a movable feast it is obvious that, whatever the weather bring to us, it can hardly be called unseasonable. If Easter is late and spring is early, there may be a holiday snatched from summer ; under different conditions a man is as likely to watch the snow-clouds massing as he is at Christmas. Or he may set out on the Friday, fully armed against the extremities of wind and weather, be comprehensively soaked

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or frozen on Saturday, and yet come back to his office on Tuesday morning with a decent show of sunburn acquired in the last two days. Whatever may be said against our climate, it refuses to follow the levelling trend of the times and to be made up of standardized parts. In this act of defiance Easter is its partner, and even when the holiday comes in the third week of April the wayfarer may be compelled on one day to take the winds more proper to March while on another he finds the coloured counties basking under the favours of May. At Christmas or later in the summer the traveller knows with some accuracy what the country-side will look like. But at Easter he may be cowering in Bleak House one year and treading a measure at Flora's carnival the next. Within the span of one Easter two days of sunshine will suddenly transform the landscape and empty a paint-box on to the fields. For those who like to know exactly where they are this may be tiresome, but for those who prefer changes and chances to the secure monotonies of city life Easter is a generous giver.

Comfort and convenience continually gain ground. The man who takes an excursion ticket on the railway which will cover many miles for a few shillings now demands a dining-car and gets it. Steamship companies can no longer treat their third-class passengers like unresisting scraps of luggage. 'Steerage'

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becomes 'student class'. The kinema has brought plush and padding to the sixpenny seats. No poor boy can now travel to school with such rich possibilities of freezing as did the sons of the gentry when Master Tom Brown was set on the roof of the Tally-ho coach for Rugby at three o'clock on a November morning. The modern motor-car, even of the cheapest type, acts as macintosh, umbrella, and warming-pan, while it makes nonsense of the old separations and distances. The chances of hindrance on the country road diminish, and, should accident happen, the motorists have their uniformed servants and the use of the far-flung telephone-box. Accordingly, while Easter itself is the most flexible and various of holidays, we can limit the uncertainties to scene and sky and impose the familiar formulae on our comings and goings. The remote cottager has heard the news by wireless before the motorist reaches him, and the traveller who leaves the Hotel Magnificent in the morning may hear the hotel's orchestra that same evening in the village inn two hundred miles away. In a year or two the wanderer in the Pennine wastes may from his night's lodging 'look in' as well as 'listen in' to a London theatre. Where, then, will the unusual and the unexpected be found? The discovery of change and chance will be harder work than ever, and naturally a great many people will not care to look for them.

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There is a Spartan school which finds something inherently delightful in discomfort and which will insist on taking the longest way round or the stiffest way up. Perhaps, as succeeding holidays offer more and more mechanical transport and a richer choice of comforts and amenities reasonably priced, the Spartan cause will flourish by virtue of contrast. On the other hand, tendency may turn the other way ; even the most resolute pedestrian can be tempted to take a lift.

Fortunately for the amateurs of the uncomfortable, there are still some openings left for the pleasure that is all but a pain. For those, too, who regard an effort as essential to enjoyment the oldest occupations remain. It is the curious paradox of our time that the scientific cultivation of mechanism has made enormously complicated processes fool-proof. If you can pay for the call, it is easier to telephone to a friend in Florida than to poach an egg ; motor-cars are frequently driven, without manifest failure, by people who have the scantiest notion as to what is happening, and not one person in a hundred of those who use a wireless set or a telephone or an electric lamp could give a rational and detailed explanation of how their purpose is achieved. The thing has been made so simple that one need not bother. But the processes, which have acquired with the centuries a tradition of simplicity, remain as

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complicated as ever. To cultivate a garden well is an affair of knowledge and of diligence. To be master of a sailing boat in gusty weather is to be faced with the same problems as the Argonauts and to learn that the problems can be uncommonly harassing. To thread one's way across the moors in a dwindling light may be rather more difficult than 'getting Berlin' or 'doing sixty' in a motor-car. Accordingly, as science and machinery continue to provide the citizen with a conjurer's outfit for the outwitting of nature, the natural impulse of some men and women at least will be to throw the magic rods away at least for holiday intervals. If guiding a motor-boat be child's play, they will prefer the man's work of lifting sail. While the shops may offer them the best fruit and flowers at fair prices, they will be the happy serfs of their own gardens and take more pleasure in a sorry product hardly won than in merchandise of incomparable quality. Thus at seasons of holiday a growing number of people will fight the growth of amenities by running away from them. They can press buttons and enjoy the results all through the week and the year. Leisure brings them a handsome offer of drudgery. Instead of lolling behind engines they have a chance to walk or sail. The spade is a friend to be taken by the hand. But not for ever. As the Easter holiday closes the devotees of rustic effort are



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beginning to remember the knobs and buttons and wires which rule the other sphere, and they are happy to exchange the intolerable intricacies of spadework in a kitchen-garden for the sweet simplicities of car and telephone.

Easter is a holiday that is apt to take us only half-aware. There can be no forgetfulness about Christmas ; hardly has November loosed its first fogs about our homes than the tradesman has begun his campaign of terrorization. The summer vacation is one for which much thought must be taken, maps consulted, and rooms booked. The shadow of August begins to loom over parental minds, in May. But Easter, like the spring in which it comes, blesses us with surprise. We knew, of course, that the time was arriving, but we had given it little consideration. Then we woke up in the morning and, lo, it was leisure ! But if ever there was a generation well skilled to make holiday without enormities of fuss and forethought it is surely our own. For one of the symbols of our time is the suit-case. Travellers in Europe are well accustomed to meeting the pilgrim sister who has traversed and surveyed the world from Grand Rapids to the Grand Canal with no more luggage than a single ' grip ', and the kind of English family that once could not get itself to Blackpool or Brighton without a vanload of trunks and much hiring of cabs and carriers now goes into holiday action

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across seas and continents with each member responsible for his own slender pack and package. Compare the scenes at any railway station now with that departure of Mr. Pickwick and his friends for a few days at Dingley Dell. For the Pickwickians six barrels of oysters and a monstrous codfish were but a fragment of the massed impediments to motion. Similar parties to-day would stow a few suit-cases in the car or on the carriage rack and be off. Accordingly we have no need to be put out by holidays that descend suddenly from the mists of the calendar like an uncovenanted benefit.

The main cause of alteration is woman's change of habit. She has not only become able-bodied in this matter of transport, but she has outdistanced man in shedding the causes of fuss and fatigue. Twenty years ago one of her hats would have taken up as much luggage space as an entire outfit does to-day, and a man who is going to pack a tweed suit and a dinner jacket with evening shirts and collars is left hopelessly behind in the rivalry of convenience. The arrival of artificial silk has added to the victories of compactness, and there would be more money to spend any Easter in the West Riding if women had not transferred some of their allegiance from heavy woollens to lighter fabrics. Now and again we are informed as to the exact number of ounces at which a woman's dress for daily occasions

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will turn the scale. It is comparable to the contents of a man's pockets, and its ration of the luggage space is proportionately small. Nor is it only the people of moderate means who are devotees of compactness; the rich who intend, by means of aeroplane, to pass a week-end in some corner of Europe which would otherwise be the goal of long, hard, and carefully prepared travelling must limit themselves to the slenderest of baggage, and motorists, though they may be able to carry much, usually and naturally prefer to carry less. The fact of a man's arrival with no more than a parcel is in these days no indication of his income. Bank balances might have been guessed in the past by the quality and quantity of leather in a family's luggage. Exactly the opposite is now beginning to be true, for those who join the aeroplane class will be known by suit-cases which manage to be reasonably tough and compendious while remaining as light as a leaf. The actual and considerable horse-power necessary to shift a Victorian family with its quiverful of crinolined or bustled daughters and all the various wrappings and trappings deemed right for journey and sojourn abroad has been replaced by the compact puissance of a midget motor-car into which a family of three or four project themselves, together with a couple of cane or fibre suit-cases to carry the wardrobe.

Everyone who goes into the country has

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increasing evidence that the cult of little things is far more truly a sign of the times than the pursuit of immensities. There may on the one hand be the absorption of the individual in industrial combines whose offices are in a sky-scraper. But the Englishman asserts himself by rejecting the foreign model of a flat in a block and by living in a small private house with a small private garden and going away from it in his own small car and with the smallest quantity of impediments. The new little houses that surround our towns will be sending out their suit-case travellers or trampers with knapsacks only. In all directions the arrangements and amenities of life are being scaled down to meet the modest requisitions of our tastes and purses. The division of large houses into small flats means a reduction of wall-space for each inhabitant. The great oil-painting is, accordingly, an anachronism, and it is a natural symptom of a suit-case age that connoisseurship should be hovering over etchings and creating a 'boom' in that once unassuming market. Collected editions appearing in 'library size' wait in majestic dolour for an occasional customer who has shelves as large as his income; meanwhile the publishers are concentrating on the 'omnibus' volumes, which pack the maximum quantity of good reading matter into the minimum of space, or joining in an excellent rivalry to show us how

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the better work of our time may be preserved in pocket form and neat aspect at three-and-sixpence a volume. Thus, while the frivolous members of the family snatch up for their holiday dancing a gramophone that lives in an attaché case, the studious can squeeze some thousands of well-printed pages into the corners of their light luggage. With a final audacity the present generation even defies the effort of the English climate to make it travel heavy ; it purchases its raincoat with a view to carrying it in the pocket, and the young woman's umbrella is so stubby a dwarf that it too can be accommodated to that sovereign of our time, the suit-case.

## VIII. Notes on Noise      ♪      ♪      ♪

WHEN Mr. Shaw was composing his preface to *Pygmalion*, he was heartily in favour of speech-control and cried out against our phonetic anarchy with a familiar vehemence :

The English have no respect for their language, and will not teach their children to speak it. They spell it so abominably that no man can teach himself what it sounds like. It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman hate or despise him. German and English are accessible to foreigners ; English is not accessible even to Englishmen. The reformer England needs to-day is an energetic phonetic enthusiast.

The battle-cry sounds well enough : unfortunately it did not allow for the obvious fact that, if reforms are to be operative, there must be some sanction behind them. In the case of speech-reform the dual need of a primary agreement as to what is correct and of a subsequent ability to promote, if not to enforce, correctness is particularly hard to meet. Mr. Shaw, indeed, appears to have abandoned hope. I have just been reading the text of some gramophone records which he has provided for the Linguaphone Institute under the title of ' Advice on How to Speak Good English '. He

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warns an imaginary foreigner that there is no such thing as ideally correct English and announces that of a highly cultivated B.B.C. Committee which is 'sitting on' pronunciation, no two members pronounce 'yes' and 'no' exactly alike. All that we can hope for, apparently, is a simple test of wide intelligibility. That is a plain judgment with which we shall most of us agree; but it reduces the *Pygmalion* thundering to the rattling of peas in a drum.

But since the *Pygmalion* days the situation has altered. The institution of broadcasting and the later connexion of the B.B.C. with the State have created a national body which must concern itself with speech-control and possesses the sanction of a considerable authority. Before the Company became the Corporation it had recognized its responsibilities and had appointed a committee on pronunciation, under the chairmanship of the Poet Laureate. In addition to four members of the B.B.C. staff the committee included Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Mr. Logan Pearsall-Smith, representing the Society for Pure English, Mr. Daniel Jones, Professor of Phonetics in the University of London, and Mr. Lloyd James, Lecturer in Phonetics at the London School of Oriental Studies. Mr. Shaw is now working with them. There, as Mr. Squeers would say, is richness for you; and

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there, too, as Mr. Shaw tells us on the gramophone, is a nice assortment of different accents and different opinions.

However, such a committee can do a certain amount of work in addition to spending pleasant afternoons in donnish disputation. It can enforce nothing, but it can lay down (and through the B.B.C. announcers exemplify) decisions on disputed points about accentuation and hard or soft vowels. The committee did, in fact, issue some decrees, though it nervously reserved itself the right to repent at leisure. It told us, for instance, that 'acoustics' is 'acoostics' and 'gyroscope' is 'jyroscope', that 'hospitable' and 'condolence' must be accented on the first syllable, that 'privacy' is 'prive-acy' and 'respite' 'réspit'; and so forth and so on. It boldly pronounced 'soldier' as 'sole-ger' and has, I hope, repented in hasty sorrow. Now, whether we like these verdicts or not, there is certainly no harm in having a verdict with authority behind it. But the committee found itself in far more serious trouble when it turned from accentuation to general problems of accent. For then it had to face the really tiresome fact that the London area is the centre of British administration and the head-quarters of everything from stage to statecraft, that it also contains the largest close concentration of English-speaking people, and that the London



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mode of speech, even among many alleged to be educated, is ugly as well as slovenly.

The chief pestilence of London English is the slurring of vowels. How far this habit has reached is proved by the fact that the committee had actually to instruct the B.B.C. announcers 'to differentiate the vowel sounds in such groups of words as "shaw, shore, sure ; yore, your ; tired, tarred," etc.' It is really staggering that an educated person should have to be told to distinguish these sounds, but worse remains behind. The committee actually despaired of getting the London English to say 'tired' at all and surrendered to the linguistic impotence of the capital. Here is the dreadful confession :

The possibility of pronouncing the 'r' in 'fire, tower, sure, hour, poor,' etc., without trilling, was demonstrated. It was felt, however, that Southern English speakers, having come to be unaware that such 'r's' had any sound value whatever, would have considerable trouble in pronouncing an untrilled 'r'. If that were so, it was agreed that the untrilled 'r' should be treated as a separate vowel, though not syllabic, e.g., 'tired' to be pronounced "tiêhd", not 'tahd'.

And again :

After some discussion it was decided that speakers of Southern English would find difficulty in pronouncing 'which, whale, why, white,' etc., with the aspirated 'w', and that no definite principle could be determined in this

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case, although differentiation between 'which' and 'witch', 'whale' and 'wail', etc., should be recommended in order to avoid homophones.

Another ugliness of London English is the resolution of different vowel-sounds into a featureless homophone, best represented by 'eh', and the committee modestly suggested that its announcers should *attempt* the differentiation of their vowels, and not pronounce 'parsonage' as 'pahsnehdge'. With a sudden rush of gallantry to the lips, the committee did agree that 'm'yah' was an intolerable rendering of 'mere', but the total result of its first deliberations was a general capitulation to local or London usage and an acknowledgment that to make Londoners take trouble with their speech is beyond the wit of all the laureates, dons, dramatists and actors, be they never so august.

This seems to me an inevitable conclusion. There can be no objective standards of right and wrong; we can only insist that speech may be fairly understood. But there must be likes and dislikes. I dislike the London English because my Scottish blood shivers at 'wite' and 'wich', because I object to being called 'Bra-own' west of Piccadilly and 'Brah'n' east of it, and because I have a terror of being myself submerged in this muddy pool of bedraggled vowels. Evil communications corrupt nice accents; even though a man come

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from Inverness, which I do not, he cannot live long by the Thames without losing vocal chastity. When I hear a West End Juliet inquiring, 'Wot's in a nem?' or an Iago calling the moor a 'moar', I am as readily incensed as Mr. Ervine; only my wrath is turned to bitterness lest long sojourn among strangers has loosened the knees of my vowels. Of the so-called Oxford accent I have no fear; I shall never be a 'quate refaned dehvane in a pahsnehdge'. But London's flattening of vowels is grimly infectious. Have I sunk to calling a 'ceb'? Once more let me disclaim self-righteousness. London English may be as correct as any other. I merely submit that it is a nasty noise.

Accordingly the B.B.C. committee had to surrender. They could adjudicate usefully on the minor issues, soften a 'g' here, and throw back an accent there. But they could not tackle the larger matter of dialect. They have admitted that London is incorrigible on the whole and if London has a right to be 'ti-éhd', the Scot has a right to roll his 'r's' as if by machinery. When the Glasgow man rhymes the drawer with the wa'er he draws and announces, 'My name is Pa'erson—two t's', he is indictable since a letter may be mauled, but scarcely murdered without injustice. But even though every cottar's Saturday night is now an orgy of listening-in, I do not

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believe that the B.B.C. has the slightest chance of obliterating varieties of accent and dialect. Its announcers, by the committee's own confession, cannot be schooled to alter their own London English. Why then should they be able to school others that the sweet Devonshire 'tu' for 'to' and the rich vowels of Northern English should vanish from the land? Sir Michael Sadler told a conference of educationists recently that the English people might become bi-lingual in the sense of having two accents, a local and a correct variety. There are different standards of beauty in our speech, but I agree with Mr. Shaw that there can be no standard of correctness beyond intelligibility over a wide area. If to that standard a musical quality can be added, so much the better. But I, for one, am not going to accept B.B.C. committees as my exemplars. Wey should eh? They mehk meh ti-éhd. For our general guidance, after all, there is a bulk and a large assemblance of authority. As an antidote to the alleged 'Oxford' accent give me the *New Oxford Dictionary*.

## IX. Farewell to Size      ~      ~      ~

**I**N the city of Detroit a building of eighty-five stories is to be raised, and some Englishmen will smile at the grandiose folly of these Americans whose houses must follow their yarns in ever going 'one taller'. But are we, after all, in any position to scoff? I am no advocate of counting stories by tens and of raising our office-piles far beyond the altitude of Beachy Head. But I am convinced that size in building is a virtue which we stupidly undervalue. Let a Londoner match the Bush Building against the ordinary office-block built forty years ago; let a Manchester man observe the new Ship Canal Offices towering like an iceberg over the dark seas of his city; let any man consider the great English fanes from oldest Avebury to newest Liverpool. Mere bulk is a constituent of beauty. There are conditions. Bulk must be under discipline; it must be size of stature and not a sprawling of adiposity. But for social purposes size is essential, and size, in so much of our post-war policy, is exactly what we are leaving out.

London's suburbs go rippling out into the Home Counties as though the tide of settlement would never turn. Villas shoot out of our new tube termini as the cash comes rattling

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down the pipes in the draper's shop. It is the same in all big towns ; here it is a speculative venture, there a municipal 'estate'. And everywhere it is a monotony of pocket-sizes. I have seen areas where post-war building has covered miles rather than acres, and in all that space there is no single structure on which the eye can rest without a sense of pettiness. Many thousands of new homes are to be seen, and there is not one with a room which would not be overcrowded by the presence of a dozen people. Street after street runs dapperly on, and in none of them is a house with more content than six or seven small rooms and the usual offices. There are no large open spaces, since each home has its patch ; there are no large buildings, since the inhabitants go away for their social occasions. There are no flats, because the English are in nothing more individualistic than in their selection of 'Sans Souci' and 'Mon Répos'. But if he wants to realize how much more handsome our up-to-date housing can be when it accepts a communal foundation, the Londoner need go no farther than the corner of Hampstead Heath which abuts on Pond Street at the bus and tram terminus. Here is a building on which the eye can rest.

But the English people are apparently determined to have no more of that kind of thing ; and, since to create a large detached home is

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now financially impossible for nearly all, we are to go on spattering the fringes of all our towns with pert little villas and squat little bungalows which eat up great quantities of space without giving in exchange either rural or urban amenities. These little habitations may be suitable bases of operation for a small car, but they are rapidly destroying the value of a car (in London at least) by establishing a twenty-mile radius of brickdom round Charing Cross. Round every great city this bungaloid fungus is choking up the meadows and spreading into the once separate villages. When the fungus actually reaches the village green the complaint about size becomes the more justified. An English village has often many diminutive cabins, but it is also the scene of pleasantly assorted sizes. The church, the manor, the barn, the inn, all gave the builder a chance to spread himself a little. Moreover, there is timber, which the suburban land-speculator usually cuts down and sells as a vile cumberer of bungaloid land. So a village has nearly always a kind of visible rhythm. It is dactylic or anapaestic according as you look from or to the church. But the modern suburb, while it may be pretty, is always petty : it is an infinite gabbling of short syllables. When it runs out into the hamlet it ruins the latter, while its own monotony of dwarfishness is made the more contemptible by having for neighbours a sturdy

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tower of the church and the spacious lawns and walls of a country house.

It is probably vain to grumble. People will have what they want, and ours is to be an age of littleness. The small purchasing power means (if we abominate flats) the small house with the small family, a small garden, small rooms, and perhaps a small car. The totem-pole of this cult stands against the small fence and is the vehicle of that wireless telephony which enables the owner of 'Littlecot' to enjoy the world's news, music, and so forth without stirring from his little parlour. If he is a religious man he can have his sermon in his own arm-chair; thus our bungalow suburbs will never need any big containing vessels for humanity, churches, theatres, concert-halls, and the like. In a year or two there will be cheap teleoptics (which will be atrociously named television), and there will be less reason than ever for the inhabitants of 'Littlecot' to decant themselves from that half-bottle of bricks and tiles. The curious thing is that the generation which is supposed to be breaking up the home with its gaddings and its jazz is, in fact, proliferating the narrowest kind of domesticity at a headlong pace. The peasant with his three acres and a cow has lost his suburban land to the cult of three bedrooms and a wireless set. Who can confidently deny that within fifty years the bungaloid fungus



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of London will not reach from Southend to Oxford and from Brighton to St. Albans? And who can reasonably hope that in all the counties now under absorption there will be any sign at all that size is a quality of building, or any admission that man demeans himself by continually knocking the roof with his head and brushing the walls with his arms? Is our civilization going down to posterity as the Brick-Box Age?

The economic drive of the time might have urged us in either of two ways. We might have had far more of the communal building with private divisions and public arrangements for supply. In that case the architect could have worked for rooms of space, dignity, and proportion since everyone would not be claiming four outer walls and a roof to himself. But the choice has gone the other way. Small privacy is the aim, and that cannot be done to-day on an average selling price of a thousand pounds unless the rooms are mean and the whole scheme of home and street kept to the doll's house standard. Meanwhile, the westward movement of the City of London and the general swelling of town life is everywhere ending the private usage of the town mansions with their noble rooms. More and more the great drawing-rooms of Bloomsbury, with their Whiggish air and ease, rattle with typewriters and are unused save from ten to six. Those

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of us who still cling to the lofts and attics of houses generously planned will be evicted before long and, looking round for lodgment, will find ourselves with no nook but 'Littlecot' and no view but a bungaloid wilderness. It makes Detroit sound tempting, for some of us are still responsive to size whether it be in the cosmic sweep of a Hardy story, the noble shoulder of a hill, or the proportions of a human house.

## X. Atlantis and Arcady

IN England we have founded a Society for the Preservation of Rural Beauty. In America, if one can judge by some of their writers, they will soon be founding a Society for the Salvage of Cities. Our towns have become invasive terrors ; theirs are beleaguered oases. A glance at the atlas shows that a journey across the broadest part of Texas is longer in mileage than a trip from London to Thurso in Caithness. A glance at the *Americana* collected by Mr. Mencken shows what goes on in Texas. In the town of Holland of that State it was recently written :

‘ Because he spent his last sixty-five cents for a copy of Shakespeare, a charge of juvenile delinquency was filed in court against Johnny Meggs, and he was yesterday sentenced to one to three years in the State Training School for Boys at Gatesville.’

If this be Arcadian innocence, who would preserve it ? Who would not dread an Arcadian march upon the cities ?

To the civilized American an Arcadian war is a defensive operation launched from the cities. But our Arcadian campaign aims at keeping, not at curing, the country-side. Our towns grow out of their clothes like loutish

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children whose raw lengths of pink wrist out-distance the dwindling sleeve. Their appetites are horrible, and woods and hills are gulped down like cake by growing boys. A London which reaches from Brighton to Reading and Ipswich seems inevitable; if the East End were not an abomination of overcrowding in gardenless houses Essex would long ago have vanished under brick. We scheme to outwit this wild fertility of building. We plan to save the moor from the motor and the cottage from the bungalow. Righteous lamentation goes up for the pastoral tradition which mortifies and the civilization which decays. The thatcher, we are told, is now as rare a specimen as buzzard and bittern; the wheelwright listens mournfully to the snort and rattle of the cars and vans and lorries; the parish pump squirts petrol; the ploughman's song is a melody which has come from Africa by way of Atlantis. The native airs are matters for research, to be scratched for like relics of Ur and Babylon. Arcady has acquired the glamour of a lost cause. Councils and committees finger the farmer's failing pulse and issue bulletins on moribund nobility.

A vital but not commonly noticed distinction between English and American conditions is manifest in this. The civilized Englishman goes in terror of the towns; the civilized American is panic-stricken by the peasant.

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Here the yeoman is seen as a victim, there as a vandal. The Englishman thinks of America in terms of its gateway, which is New York, and he thinks of New York in terms of skyscrapers, crowds, noise, dollars, crooks, bootleggers, latest dances, licentious plays, movies, and the Long and Coney Islands. In his school-days he read about the prairies, but they have faded from his mind. The echo of bison's roar and mustang's hoof, so vivid in the youthful ear, has passed, and he is not aware of the noise that has taken its place. In Edenton, North Carolina, the Rev. Mr. Taylor and the Rev. Mr. Dick recently conducted a public debate on the question, 'Will the negro retain his present colour in heaven?' with the Rev. Mr. Taylor asserting his faith in chromatic versatility. The old Arcady has given place to the new. Are we to wonder if Americans see the rural problem in a way that is not ours?

To the average Englishman the American is a go-getting, globe-trotting townsman who comes about the time the swallow dares and nests expensively in Europe. The American as yokel is not in his range of vision. The prairie-folk and mountain herdsmen are out of sight and out of mind. But they are very much in the mind of American patriots like Mr. Mencken. Where the Redskin braves once gloried and puffed their pipes a new white chieftain may be prohibiting cigarettes;

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cigarettes, it is true, are not a civilization in themselves, but liberty of solace and recreation has something to do with the case. Lone Wolf had not heard of grand opera, but his state was the more gracious than that of the succeeding landlord who regards grand opera as a kind of sin. Neither had Lone Wolf much theory of the natural sciences. But he could give points in culture to the Rev. Charles F. Bluske, of Asheville, North Carolina, who recently observed, 'Take a jackass, a hog, and a skunk and tie them together and you have a scientific evolutionist.' Arcady in Asheville is not a reassuring tribute to the cargo of the covered waggon.

Englishmen are accustomed to the information that America is ruled by women. But the male 'hicks' and hinds appear to have considerable power as silencers when art or science intrude upon the conversation. 'Students at Southern Junior College, at Ooltewah, Tennessee, made a huge fire of vanity accessories, story-books, papers, and music on the campus, burning everything which they considered worldly.' Perhaps the papers and music deserved it; but one cannot feel confident that Wagner would escape arson if he found his way to Ooltewah. What America has to face is not one Dayton or Ooltewah, but a thousand score of hamlets where an infantile theology is the ruler of all minds and morals.

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At least, so an Englishman must read the situation. The forgotten American bumpkin is not only lord in his own Main Street ; he is strong enough to rule the cities. His scourge may be no more substantial than a voting-paper, but it can fall with considerable punitive energy on the backs of urban men. From his prairie fastness or his mountain aerie he sends out his edicts and his deputies. Senators are his servants, and Washington is his wash-pot. Over New York has he cast his hob-nailed boot. The citizens may thirst, but they may not drink. Geneva may call, but America must not hear. The west wind carries with it a flight of negatives, bans, and prohibitions. Arcady speaks and Atlantis must listen.

An Englishman can have Arcadian leanings without nurturing ridiculous illusions. His Arcadianism is no mere selfish passion for making green fields safe for week-enders or a timid apprehension that the inseparable adjectives ' quaint ' and ' old ' may vanish from the house agent's vocabulary. The decent townsman is not proud of a country-side which pays its farm workers twenty-six shillings a week ; he does not believe that a damp cabin of two rooms is that bit of heaven familiar in sentimental ballads because it has a thatched roof. He can scent a sinister phase of rustic morals without discovering the village green to be hell's playground unqualified in the manner of

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novelists whose noses are suspiciously long. Around and above it all he sees something worth rescuing apart from the trees and fields themselves ; there is a way of life which is a legacy, and for that legacy we are all trustees. The Arcadian has a vote, as Labour knows to its cost. But to all parties he has the charm of a weaker brother, and to none is he the smocked dictator who may ban our books and govern our policy. Here he has tradition without power ; in America power without tradition. Dollars in the bank and a reach-me-down set of ideas may give contentment to a pastoral scene in the Hog Belt. But it leaves the city scared. What new and vicious virtue will Arcady next adopt and enforce ? What gift of culture will the village blacksmith next hammer flat upon his anvil ? The time may come when Mr. Mencken's intellectual heirs and assigns will go in search of Arcady in Texas, and rescue the last Arcadian from his debts and his despairs. A Society for the Preservation of the Rural Mind may become fashionable sport in Baltimore. But not yet. Meanwhile the cities must man their barricades, and the typewriters go rattling into action. And so they do. One child at least has been among the Arcadians taking notes, and his ammunition is piled high for battle.



## XI. Driving at Practice

AS of old the Englishman 'drives at practice', and when religion is discussed in conversation or, as widely of late, in public print the stream of opinion runs naturally and strongly against dogma. One is led to suppose that if the blood of martyrs be the seed of the Church the brain of the theologian is as dangerous an invader as tares among the wheat. The average Englishman (if, indeed, it is ever the average Englishman who involves himself in public argument) is moved by the conception of 'something not ourselves that makes for righteousness'. But to analyse that mystery and so to formulate mental judgments about its nature is held not only to be inessential but to be definitely fatal to the democratic appeal of religion. The new creed is that there is no creed. In its feeblest form such intuitionism reduces the conception of deity to a kind of mental hot-water bottle against which the believer may foster his tepid aspirations towards virtuous living or peace of mind. In its more dignified condition it reminds one of the theocratic interlude in the life of Mr. Wells, for whom the deity became a directly apprehended but not very articulate sovereign

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while such explicit go-betweens as Athanasius were represented as the very devil.

An empty church or chapel could hardly be filled by a guarantee that the Athanasian creed would be recited at every gathering of the congregation, or even by the promises of a debate on its meaning and its merits. England has had its great theologians, and in England, as elsewhere, many men and women were once prepared to die for points of theology which might now be dismissed as the mere frills and furbelows of faith. But the abstract thinking which is based on dogmatic argument has now lost what fascination it possessed. There is still a type of mind which loves the abstract idea, just as there is a type of mind which abhors it. The Englishman is not easily tempted by the cold beauty of pure thought. He is responsive to a simple moral ideal, and Mr. Shaw has long twitted him on his capacity for confusing discomfort with duty. He is moved to action particularly when he sees the moral idea being sustained by some practical example, and the Germans showed themselves most incompetent psychologists when they handed the cause of 'Little Belgium' to the speakers on English recruiting platforms. The Slavonic mind is perhaps the most affectionate nurse of abstract ideas. In Slavonic countries it is continually complained about the Englishman that he will cling to actualities in his

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fireside conversation as to a macintosh on a rainy day. When asked out to a foreign home he is mildly talkative about the weather, the rate of exchange, and the cooking of the country. The Slav would like him to go straight for first principles and send the immortality of the soul round the social circles with the coffee and the cakes.

It is a commonplace that the writing about writers which aims at a really wide public must avoid the abstract as though it were the very genius of journalistic disaster. A racy description of a poet's misfortunes in marriage or tastes at the table evidently satisfies far more people than any criticism which seeks to probe the impulse and the ideals of his poetic method. This is not to suggest that the English 'everyman' is a boor; the successful library that bears his name is fair proof to the contrary; but the Englishman who reads a great author is not therefore inclined to read a critic who would analyse the first principles of that greatness. The Pauline Epistles contain some wonderful examples of abstract thinking, but to the Englishman the New Testament means the Gospels and the Acts.

One reason why the Communist propaganda in this country has made so few converts, despite its intensity and the zeal of its missionaries, is that the European attitude to Socialist theory is so widely different from our

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own. Every now and then a veteran Labour leader publishes his reminiscences. There is always a section which describes his mental progress to the new creed. Very rarely has that change been made by the impact of an economic treatise or of the scientific Socialism of Karl Marx. Things seen and suffered, half-hours with the poets, especially with Robert Burns, and the influence of undogmatic Christianity, have done more for the Labour party than train-loads of pamphlets. The foreign Communist keeps hammering away with his general propositions which reduce the sway of social forces to the likeness of terms in an algebraic equation. To the intuitive reformer who relies on right feeling for his spur to action and on experience for his guide scientific Socialism of this kind becomes as dismal a science as ever the nineteenth century economists made of theirs. The rank and file of the British Labour party are Radicals who have moved on because their party has not moved fast enough. The average Labour voter is no more a scientific Socialist than he is a bi-metallist. The essence of English Radicalism has been its faith in natural law and its consequent demand that positive law should express the natural rights of human personality. The philosopher may carve the doctrine of natural rights into as many fragments as he pleases, but he cannot easily do

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away with the fundamental right to have rights, and the Englishman who clings to a vague, unargued faith in rights is probably near to a great political truth although he could not explain how he got there.

Thus, when we discriminate between peoples who have a great delight in abstract thinking and those who can better understand the concrete example and the personal touch, we are not making comparisons in a table of human values. It is not a case for allotting marks and putting the empiricist in a lower class than the man whose mind is ever seeking for the permanent below the transient and for the laws with which reason underpins the shifting phenomena of sense-perception. There can be excess of speculation as there can be excessive dread of it, and the popular suspicion that theology can suffocate religion is not groundless. The history of the world reveals the two tendencies in fruitful interplay. Superficially the practical Roman may seem to have made a bigger mark upon the world than the speculative Greek, but the latter's real contribution to civilization is incalculable. So, in the world-pattern traced out by the creative mind of man, the Englishman's aversion from 'high priori' methods has resulted in a contribution of considerable worth. It was English 'utility' that withstood the dangerous claims of German absolutism in philosophy, and 'utility', wisely

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understood, is a cause from which no man need shrink, however much it has been abused. We 'drive at practice', as the saying goes, and practice, though it may not make perfect, can at least make progress.

## XII. That Other London

WE are always pulling down something, and now it is to be the Old Swan Pier. There will be another jetty east of London Bridge to do its work, and the pier, after all, is only a few baulks of timber. Analyse it in good, prosaic accuracy and you will find only a little vegetable and mineral matter projecting into so much muddy water. But it was a gate for many Cockneys, and its leisurely, venerable name, like that of some tranquil country inn, suggested the London that was a string of villages, the London unblackened, unbustling, and unorganized.

From the Old Swan Pier the pleasure-steamers ran down to Southend and Margate. Londoners use their river so little that it was a novel, and a noble, holiday for the family parties to come swarming down to narrow lanes from the busy City to the little pier. The very heart of the workaday world would be beating as hard as ever within a stone's cast of the Old Swan. Yet, down here, on the river bank, you had left the mart to discover the port, and the trippers who were off to the coast-resorts to fill themselves with shell-fish and beer were to be struck amaze by the grand parade of London's river. As ship after ship

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came up or down, the mileage of this majesty would put a spark of delight into the dullest clod. Dissipation and discovery went hand in hand. This Old Swan Pier, with its summer steamboats and happy crowds of perspiring Cockneys and clamorous children, was the first page of a geography book that the majority of Londoners never open at all. Since the London County Council steamboats were abolished, as the result of a party faction-fight, there has been no way by which we could go down through the Port of London to Greenwich and the sea except when we owned or hired a private boat. There is no lovelier way of spending an idle afternoon when the sun is on the water than to make the trip, but for the average person it is impossible. However, the paddle-steamers, making their day-trips to the seaside towns, did do something to introduce the Londoner to the London he so rarely sees. When we pull down the Old Swan Pier we shall be destroying a gateway of great price, a gateway to the Other London.

London is a strange city in many ways, but strangest of all in this one thing. It certainly was, and probably still is, the world's greatest port; the sea has made it; the sailor has summoned it into being and sustained it in its magnitude. Yet the Londoner you meet has no sense whatever that he is maritime. The docks are far closer to his office than the suburb



## That Other London

where he lives. Yet they are an unknown, unknowable desert in his mind, as far away as Sahara or Saskatchewan. East of Aldgate he not only never goes, but never sends his thought or flings a fancy. There is news of a dockers' strike. It seems as remote to him as an earthquake in China—until, suddenly, he finds that his bread is costing him more or even disappearing altogether. If one talked of the Two Londons most people would think one was talking of Rich and Poor. But that is not the only or even the essential distinction. The real difference is between the London which drags its livelihood out of the water and the London which pretends that the Thames is just a river with some pretty reaches up at Richmond and some embankments and bridges lower down. From the one London, the capital with its head in the air or on the desk, you step straight into the other with its eye on the water and its hand on the wheel or the oar or the crane. There is no need to take a railway journey to change your London world. You just drop down humdrum Cannon Street to the Old Swan Pier. These trembling timbers are the threshold of the Other London. Embark and you are far more a traveller than if you had gone four hundred miles from one capital to the next.

As your boat drops downstream you see relics of the old stately civilization of the Maritime London. Fishmongers' Hall and the

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Custom House are in the grand classic manner, but after that you enter the wilderness of the wharves and warehouses whose cranes stand up in spiky defiance of the sky. On the water there is much parade of ill-favoured shipping and of the grubby boats which do the world's work and do not have sports decks and swimming baths. Grim toilers of this kind swing in and out of the harbour, and there, coming up with the tide, under modest spread of rich, brown sail, is a Thames barge, beating through the choppy little waves very low in the water and bearing its burden exactly as boats have done since the Romans came. For decorative quality the Other London, despite all its squalor of bankside debris, can win every time. Stage a race of Thames barges straining under russet canvas on a day of breeze and brilliance and you may turn out your Guards, troop your colour, throw in a royal procession to Parliament and a Lord Mayor's show, and still you will have utterly failed to rival in spectacle the simple gifts of London's river.

Downstream you go, and men with water-lore will keep you informed about the secrets of the queer, dark shores. There lived Rogue Riderhood, that ghoulish figure out of Dickens, and there was the 'Jolly Watermen' where he drank under the stern discipline of Miss Abbie Potterson. There is Limehouse Church with its serene spire, and there are the various docks

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with their narrow jaws and great bodies prickly with masts. And so to Greenwich, where Wren built the hospital and the seventeenth century has spread a feast of reason in stone. The old Trafalgar Inn, where the Victorian grandees used to come down for supper before a night of routs and revels or for breakfast after it, has gone the way of all too many taverns, but you can sit and eat whitebait in the great bow-windowed dining-room of the 'Ship' and watch the barges tacking under sail or see a large stranger with U.S. on its funnel being tugged to its London berth. The 'Ship' was built in the spacious Victorian style when furniture was cheap and landlords liked to spread themselves in the way of plush upholstery, horsehair sofas, and lace curtains. At the 'Ship', as you look over the water to the chimney-stacks of the Isle of Dogs, you are in the placid heart of the Other London. To sit there is like listening to those shells in which the rumble of the ocean is supposed perpetually to reverberate.

Why is this Other London so left to itself? It has its writers, of whom H. M. Tomlinson is the unofficial and unchallenged laureate. But the public which is more and more deserting the river of green trees and quiet reaches has entirely abandoned the Pool. It is left to those who must live by it, save when *The Golden Eagle* paddles by with its deckloads

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of blissful, Bass-inflated roysterers. On and on this Other London goes, mile after mile, till Gravesend is reached and the real sea begins. In the old days London was proud of its river and made its water work like a good horse in harness. Even in the London of Shakespeare's time there were many thousands of licensed watermen. Now we have so narrowed the banks that the tide races up and down in a way which makes boat-services difficult. It seems monstrous that we should be denied our jaunts to Greenwich, and now these regrets of mine should be a kind of swan-song for the Old Swan Pier. But there it is. The Thames, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all its sons away. Aye, and its Swans too.

### XIII. Quite a Picture      ~      ~      ~

THE guide-book, one of the large, not-in-a-series kind that pretend to be something better and carry a pretentious cargo of ecclesiastical scholarship and bogus folk-lore, as it were a tour-conductor in bishop's gaiters and don's clothing, informed us that we should see 'a veritable Garden of Allah'. Why a Cornish cove should be thus Afric we could not imagine. Was it that the portentous author was intoxicated by the proximity of the River Camel? Had Mr. Robert Hichens once occupied a region bungalow? Did the barrows on the cliff shelter decaying sheiks and were those earthworks raised by the Foreign Legion? We could not guess, but one thing at least was manifest. When, in the bright sunshine and in the sweetly stinging air, we came down the rocky path, it was all as pretty as pretty could be. Nothing was in view but what was clean and gay and shining, like the seascapes you can buy in the picture-shops in the Strand.

According to the Southern Railway we were viewing 'The Atlantic Coast'. But the Atlantic suggests a long grey roll of waters, and the sea here was only a dimpled placidity. So blue was the water that the Isles of Greece might decently have sprung up through a

## Now on View

submarine trap-door. Here should Alcaeus and Sappho burn and sing, remembering, however, that the natives are of the Methodist persuasion and that music, like golf, is not to be endured on Sundays, save it be hymn-tunes. A flask of Chian should have replaced the bottled beer which made the basket a burden. Those elder artists, of whose pictorial style Tadema was surely the Alma Mater, ought to have bestrewn the cliff top with the baggage of their craft. For here was a perfect Academy picture of the time before the Cornish school began to berattle the critics and even woo the *Daily Mail* by suggesting the more substantial attributes of plain young women having their sleep out.

Undoubtedly the thing was faultless in its lay-out and its colour-scheme. Had the elder painters held a roll-call of their raw material there would have been a rapid volley of 'Here, sir,' from the cliff (correctly beetling), from the sand (correctly golden), from the sea (correct alike in tint and in translucency), from the rocks (correctly rugged and arranged), and from the lonely island-crag (correctly holding the centre of the back-stage, and being as sea-girt as sea-girt can be). Yes, it was exactly right for the good old school, of whose persons I am a deep respecter. I once knew a real artist—that is to say a man who lived by selling his paintings (without pulling strings in Fleet Street) instead

## Quite a Picture

of having a rowdy place in Chelsea and thriving on the family dividends. He was never paragraphed and always persistent. His ingredients of composition were obstinately tripartite, a bit of a mountain, a bit of a lake, and a tree in the foreground. Cumberland served him richly and, if it sometimes failed the anti-cyclonic nature of his colour-scheme, he was not to be bullied by that. His mind to him a kingdom was and his mind saw blue. Out of the blue he honourably reared a family of fourteen.

Our Cornish cove would have been just the place for him. It was perfectly the picture. As I lay and gazed at all this peaceful beauty, I could only wonder what a really up-to-date artist would do about it. He might, he probably would, turn away in disgust. But suppose him under compulsion to paint the scene—what then? Here was life obedient to Oscar Wilde and imitating art as diligently as it could. But the art it was imitating was hopelessly old-fashioned. To be faithful to such a view could only mean turning out the stuff that huge Victorian canvases were made on, the efficient, marketable stuff of the nineties which grandees bought to cover the stupendous acreage of mansion walls. Naturally, no modern could tell the truth about so obvious a beauty, since it is now the first duty of a picture to avoid the picturesque. He would have to

## Now on View

take up a punishing brush and teach Nature a lesson in brutality. If he dare not repeat, he could at least reject. Afraid to imitate he would have to impose. He could clamp on to all this pitiful tranquillity a vision from the world where starkness is all. Perhaps he could fling Euclid into Nature's all too sweet a face. Might not the cliff be reduced to a sequence of rhomboids? After all, those familiar cattle drinking academically at eventide have long been compounded by Chelsea into a series of Oxo cubes. After the cows, the cliffs. Again, why see blue? Art can the multitudinous seas incarnadine, making the blue one red. Or yellow, as the mode demands. Where there's a cry, there's a hue.

None the less the trouble remains for the artist of the present day who lacks stark inclinations that he cannot be gentle without going in danger of derision. If the theme be gentle, he must falsify or pass it by: let him distort or depart. The Cornish cove, seen on such a day of calm beneficence, seemed a hopeless task. The poster-artists of our time with their preposterous absurdities of local colour will paint you any grey old town as a peacock-city, twice as gay as Monte Carlo, and the railways would lure us to Shrimpton by painting that dingy group of lodging-houses as the purplest of romantic patches. But what is amusing on an urban hoarding has nothing to



## Quite a Picture

do with the truth, and I suppose that art should still be on some kind of nodding terms with reality. Accordingly, the artist confronted with the blatantly picturesque is in a devil of a fix. He can fake it into some fashionable ugliness or he can funk it altogether. Or else, with sublime daring, he can admit that Nature does have its sentimental moods, its tranquillities, its caressing gestures, and its happy endings: then, having admitted, he can determine to be true to the fact and make his picture picturesque, damning the consequences and willing to be convicted of the sin of chocolate-boxing.

If he does so, he may have to wait awhile for fame. But the rage for ruthlessness is probably as ephemeral as any other rage; the sun will not go down upon this wrath. In the meantime the poor man has still a meek, unfashionable public; there are the playgoers who flocked for a year to see Victorian *Marigold* instead of hustling from one crooks' corner to the next and vowing no piece to be supportable which does not have a cupboard in every corner of the stage and a skeleton in every cupboard. Lavender may be permitted to replace civet as the proper odour of entertainment, and sweet and twenty may be no longer pushed off stage by fast and fifty. Madrigals and moonshine will come again and poets will indite sonnets to their ladies' lips instead of

## Now on View

leaving it to German novelists to be eloquent about strumpets' thighs. When the wheel turns it will not be utterly towards the false. The cant of sweetness has been driven into exile by the rival cant of the sour and the stark. Both are unjust to life, which has more tempers than one. The Cornish cove has only to wait for a complex Atlantic depression to lose the tenderness which now it shows.

But it can be tender and its tenderness is just as true as its power to terrorize. It can be placid and picturesque as well as grey and grand. While it basks, is it therefore to be banned? The temptation is to scoff at those Dartmoor sunsets in the Strand picture-shops, and I suppose that the technicians can prove them to be wretchedly executed. But the idea of them is not a lie. Dartmoor does greet the sun with purple and go to bed in a misty ecstasy of blue and grey. It does look sometimes like a place for lovers' meetings. I have seen the great waste thus wearing its heart upon its sleeve, just as I have now seen the Atlantic miming the Mediterranean. I have groaned in my time against the creed that all is right with the world when thinking makes it so. I have declared war on the sweet serenities of story-telling and play-making. But one needs to be reminded that the thing does happen sometimes and that Nature can earn the initials R.A. When the Atlantic leads us back to

## Quite a Picture

Dicksee, a temporary surrender becomes inevitable. On returning to London I shall view more kindly those picture-shops where all is blue. For I have seen Nature enormously succeeding in being 'quite a picture'.

#### XIV. Obeisance to Blackpool ~ ~

IT was the opening day of the Blackpool season and we were going to see the Blackpool Follies of 1928. But we never did see them, though I am sure they were gay, witty, beautiful and most tremendously meet to be seen. I am also sure that at Blackpool nobody ever does see what he means to see. The whole place is too interruptive ; it catches your eye and pulls your sleeve and whisks you here and there. This is none of your grim towns where a man is chained to his purpose, but a shore so genial and abounding, so vast and so various, that it becomes impossible to distinguish between one palace of pleasure and another. Amid this terrific acreage of animated hospitality there is no halting here or tarrying there because of some privy time-table sketched out at breakfast-time. Blackpool sucks you in as by a conduit and then takes command.

But first a word as to the conduit. The road from Preston cries Blackpool's pleasures from a hundred hoardings. It is the triumph of Blackpool that one does not resent these screamings and scribblings of bliss to come. The flats of the Fylde are dreadfully dull and graceless, and, when you notice that the cottages have their walls not only placarded but painted

## Obeisance to Blackpool

with news of Blackpool's novelties, you only want to laugh. One has to be very fussy to use scolding words like 'desecration' about the lugubrious levels behind Blackpool. Let posters be their posies. Even the most austere of sniffers at the democratic joys will find the tug of Blackpool working on him like the undercurrent which pulls one down a shelving beach. Should you take the southern conduit which sucks you in through prim St. Anne's you will be in love with the robust abundance of Blackpool even before you reach it. For St. Anne's, so near in fact and so far in spirit from the people's paradise along the shore, is most beautifully engaged in lifting the hem of its garment and in keeping its shoulders from being rubbed. On every road of its red-bricked villadom, that genteel study in scarlet, 'chars-à-bancs' are most visibly prohibited. In Blackpool (and nearer home) we call them 'charabancs', regardless. But they have been to school at St. Anne's—or rather to academies for the sons and daughters of ladies and gentlemen—and they understand, even on the Town Council, the nice conduct of plurals in Gallic compounds. Thus, with a single letter in his sling, David shows himself to be quite the little gentleman in his defiance of the Philistine Goliath that sprawls across the region sands.

Now the conduit has done its work ; we are

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engulfed. Round and about are Towers, Wheels, Big Dippers, Little Dippers, Noah's Arks, and all the scaffolding of entertainment. It is as though a baby-god had been playing meccano and had left his structural litter on the shores of the Fylde. In front and around, however, there is order and cleanliness. Blackpool began as a waste of sand-dunes and has had to clamp down this Sahara by sitting squarely and forcibly on the wilderness of dust and 'bents'. By taking thought and building materials in equal and enormous quantities, the Town Councillors have occupied miles of this territory and consolidated all their positions. Here, they have cemented their victory; there, they have turned nature into a concrete proposition. If grass is to grow it must do so to order in a sunk garden or on a highly organized lawn. Where on the North Shore the dunes rise to some little height Blackpool commands them to be cliffs. Other resorts have cliffs; shall Blackpool be less than Dover, Llandudno, or Land's End? Cliffs, after all, are only bits of rock, and bits of rock are purchasable, transportable matter. Accordingly Blackpool has faced and is still busy facing its dunes with rock and teaching nature a thing or two about the stratification most comfortable to holiday humans who want a place in the sun and about the proper distribution of boulders in the layout of nook and niche. What can one do but

## Obeisance to Blackpool

surrender to a city which sets out to make its own cliffs ?

The victory has not been won over dunes only ; the deep itself is kept at a decent distance and under tactful discipline. If you wish to become an oarsman you need not hazard yourself on tidal and turbulent waters. You attend upon the concessionaire of a boating-pool who provides (a) a strong wall to keep out the Irish Channel, (b) at sixpence for thirty minutes a flat-bottomed boat with handles which enable you to become a paddle-steamer in your own person, (c) a guarantee that the water is not more than eighteen inches deep. There is another pool in which the maximum depth is scheduled at twenty-one inches. At Blackpool, you see, all tastes are catered for. I have never been one to go roaring after wet sheets and a wind that follows fast, and rowing I regard as a ridiculous form of sedentary labour, properly left to slaves by the gentry of the ancient world. But if one must go boating, let it be done in the Blackpool way, by turning a handle in unquestionable security. Behind that ocean wall there is as much peace as the density of population will allow. A huge and hospitable appeal is posted by the pool. 'It is sheltered here. Come and be comfy.' For those, like myself, who are weary of the wind on the heath, full fathom five, the salt foam breaking and other high poetical matters, these are

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indeed persuasive words. Yes, like Mr. Masefield, I must down to the seas again, but only where there is a guaranteed depth of eighteen inches.

Blackpool's attitude to nature is pure eighteenth-century. The thing may have to go on existing, but man's job is to improve on it. Concrete does not whirl about and get in your eyes and nose like the gritty surface of wind-blown dunes. Let there be concrete so that we may have all the ozone and none of the nuisance. Bathing is conducted, like boating, under proper architectural cover and conditions. The bathing-pool is a fine Augustan building which stands out in a serene classicism to face the baroque of the Big Dipper and other rococo lures of the Amusement Park. There are scheduled depths and a café and the sea is permitted to insert itself at requisite intervals for refreshment and renewal of the bathers' raw material. The visitor cannot make a pest of himself by getting drowned nor can the sea be even faintly disconcerting to the aquatic folk by reason of tempest or typhoon. A town which arranges its own cliffs can surely organize its own wash-pot. On, Blackpool, on.

Of all the virtues of this town I like most its willingness to please and its unquenchable gratitude for your patronage. In so many English resorts there seem to be nothing but frowns and grumbles and prohibitions from the



## Obeisance to Blackpool

station to the pier-head. The English inn is now commonly placarded with a thousand tyrannical threats and negations. Your immediate inclination is to slink away from so much scolding. But your Blackpool landlord roars across the wall, 'You Are Welcome Here. Baby Guinness Fivepence.' Indeed painters of signs and printers of placards seem here to specialize in the word 'welcome'. Furthermore, whenever you leave any of the halls of pleasure, you see written up alongside the word 'Exit', 'Thank you. Please Come Again'.

The classic authorities on rhetoric used to demand fullness (*copia*) as an essential: there had to be lots of stuff in the real orator. Blackpool is abundant in just this way. It is the most copious city I have seen. Enter the Tower at 'a bob a nob' and you are never finished with the resources of the place. You have no sooner seen the more repulsive of God's creatures goggling at you in the tanks of the aquarium than you are whirled on to zoos, roof-gardens, Moorish tea-rooms, and a ball-room of staggering grandeur and acreage. Curiously happy all the trippers appear, considering that it is happiness they seek. Even the policeman is smiling at his drudgery of traffic-direction, and the kind of man who in Manchester or Leeds takes for granted his right to tread on your toes or elbow you off your feet

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will actually apologize in Blackpool. There are many to whom this will seem a miracle and incredible, but the copiousness of the town does actually extend even to good temper. Other places may have 'long bars' in their hotels. In Blackpool you can measure bars by the furlong and smoke-rooms by the square mile. but do not unkindly suppose that it was a surveying expedition of this sort which kept me from my immediate duty of seeing one particular show. Blackpool, like any town which has but a single thought, is spectacle enough. One's eyes dazzle. I repeat that Blackpool is no place for a programme. The town takes off its coat and turns up its sleeves in the bustling service of pleasure. Accordingly you have to place yourself in Blackpool's hands and take what comes. It is sure to be copious.

## THE MODERN MUSE

### I. Facts and Fairies      ♪      ♪      ♪

THAT it may profit the modern author to keep company with magic is now well established ; that category of books and plays known as the ' highbrow best-seller ' provides some evidence that rewards and fairies may go hand in hand. The grander treasure is hardly to be lifted as yet by mere rubbing of rings and lamps with a discreetly antiquarian gesture. The shady side of Mayfair remains more immediately auriferous, and the cynical Cyprian with a coronet is a safe conductress to Gold Reef City. But you can be sure of attracting a decent show of attention if you send your hero spinning from this century into the last but one, or rescue Shelley from the waters to enjoy an American renaissance, or turn the matron of a girls' school into a panther, or slip Puck into a stockbroker's bosom and launch him, gyrating in gossamer, across an elfin Piccadilly. Even a hard-headed young man from Bradford like Mr. J. B. Priestley cannot keep out of the moonshine now. He must throw his first novel into the fairies' ring, dump Ruritania on the Yorkshire moors, and compose a whimsical

## Now on View

myth whose second title might accurately run 'Mooncalf Into King'.

It makes a change, of course, to be transported to Arcady instead of to jog once more upon the loop line from Knype to Bursley. But, if we are thus determined to lose our heads a little, it is prudent not to lose them altogether. That we are in danger of this larger ecstasy is shown by the wanton way in which the word 'imagination' is now flung about. The writer who releases a sprite or two among his teacups is called 'imaginative' and praised as a noble star-y-pointing pyramid among the wretched little hovels of common sense. The trouble began in the theatre some years ago, when there was a sudden whooping and howling on the left wing. It was not argued that to maintain the realistic idiom is to be an earthly clod and dull as ditchwater; it was simply announced. We were informed that any play was grand in which a city clerk suddenly danced with Titania, and that a great spiritual illumination was certain to attend any action which was entirely conducted in obscurity. The new lighting has accustomed us to darkness: the actor in the advanced, imaginative way of business has settled down to being faintly heard and never seen, content to be a producer's implement in the manufacture of 'atmosphere'. To this we have now become so acutely sensitive that only the very curmudgeons of conservatism

## Facts and Fairies

will be found to suggest that 'expressionism' is the resort of those who have nothing to express.

'Imagination' was the cry, and the novel had to set a light, fantastic toe in the treading of the new and fanciful measure. So the progressive critic, the friend of any world but his own, puts Burslem out of bounds, turns his back on Tanner's Lane, and kicks the whole Forsyte family out of doors. Sometimes he may suffer a lingering affection for the realm of fact, but only if the fact be foreign and not less than two hundred years old. The minor French writers of the eighteenth century may pass with a scrape, but otherwise fantastical-metaphysical is strictly enjoined. The true university of these days would appear to be a collection of spooks, and the likeliest heroine is she who can undergo the most bizarre metamorphosis. Young men who lose their personalities are as much in favour as young women who dance at a witches' sabbath. In short, we need not travel far to find at least six authors in search of a pose and being highly commended for their imaginative flights when they have found it.

None the less to some of the curmudgeons it still seems true that a man can write about his neighbour without confessing himself to be a clod without a spark. The propagandists of cloud-cuckoo-land, who cry up desirable

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sites in the moonshine as the only residential area of the Muses, have been afflicted with the notion that where the eye is at work the fancy must be out of action. From this astonishing belief they go on to assert that he who writes of what he knows must be imaginatively inferior to him who writes about what nobody can ever know. Is it stressing the obvious to insist that he who begins by observing must go on to imagine and that fancy is being worked at full stretch when the writer spins from his brain the actions and reactions of the ordinary man in the less ordinary circumstance? Yes, obvious it is, but the trite has to be put in service when so much glib nonsense is being fetched up for the defence of fairyland.

Great play is made with the word 'superficial'. For an author to soak himself in the humours of the age until the responsive mind drips fatness is, one gathers, to be a mere thrall working at the surface, whereas the genuine miners of literature are the brave spirits who delve deep into eternal and elemental things—such as goblins. According to this argument Oberon is not only a greater character than Bottom, who is damned by the fact that he might have been seen in Warwickshire, but also a far more artistic creation than Falstaff, who made the mistake of hob-nobbing with real scamps in real taverns. When Mr. Bennett, in search of a theme, took a penny bus to

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Clerkenwell instead of the Blue Train or the Moonshine Limited, he was, by this token, showing himself to be a dull dog as well as demoded. What imagination could there be in the composition of Mr. Earlforward if the man took his wedding-breakfast at the Corner House, what imagination in Elsie who was shod in the King's Cross Road instead of flitting it in seven-league boots? A preposterous conclusion, it may be said. Yet it is exactly the goal to which we are led by the knowing ones who call Mr. Galsworthy 'superficial' because he has not yet turned Soames Forsyte into a leprechaun and Mr. Bennett's method 'stale' because he has not followed up his old wives with young witches.

The truth of the matter is that the author who goes touring in the kingdoms of unreason is taking the line of least resistance, since fancy free is a far more accommodating guide than fancy bound to reality. Lady Macbeth must surely have caused Shakespeare more trouble than a whole boiling of witches, just as Hamlet's critique of actuality represents a hundred times more brainwork than does the eloquence of the Ghost. The incompetent dabbler in the supernatural may make a supreme fool of himself, but competence will find necromancy more tractable matter than a neighbour's parlour. For anyone with an average command of expression it is easier to write a good

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story of his grandfather's boggart than of his grandfather. In the company of wraiths criticism has nothing to bite upon ; but when ourselves are the theme we are all judicial to some purpose. A tolerant opinion will lay no ban of exile on fairies and will show no itch to prosecute the trespassers in moonshine. But it will demand an equal tolerance for the imagination which feeds on fact and shows the age its form and pressure by its reaction to things seen. If terror be sought there can be nothing so terrible as truth ; for sheer power to make one shiver, Miss Katharine Mansfield drove the professional horrors clean out of the field when she wrote the story of 'Ma Parker'. Ma Parker did not sup with the devil or serve a witches' cauldron. She served the scrubbing-brush and supped with nobody. Miss Mansfield did not turn to a grisly dungeon to find the agony of loneliness ; she merely turned to the scullery and took her imagination with her. It was enough.



## II. The Newest Rich      ~      ~      ~

**I**T was lately rumoured that two young English writers who had several successful plays running or novels circulating in various countries had been drawing a thousand pounds a week each in royalties. Whether the figure is precisely accurate does not much matter. It is obvious that when a dramatist may be drawing ten per cent on two thousand pounds a week for a popular play in one theatre with concurrent incomes from New York, Chicago, and other cities, with a few superfluities of film rights, touring rights, and amateur rights, the thousand-pound look will easily become visible. A thousand pounds a week is just a little more than the interest on a capital of a million pounds invested at an average of five per cent. The newest rich have arrived, and the more one looks into the future the harder it is to discover a limit to the fortunes of the lucky and skilful writer.

Admittedly there is no certainty about this kind of income. Plays and stories which go up like a rocket sometimes come down like the stick. One continent's meat is another's poison. There is no guarantee that the author who captures one capital at the first rush will not be repulsed with losses when he makes his next advance. But the possibility of making

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colossal sums of money by writing twenty thousand words of dramatic dialogue or eighty thousand words of narrative is definitely established. For the first time in the history of the world the author may keep more servants than a pillar of industrial plutocracy and shake a contemptuous cheque-book in the face of a railroad king. We are used to seeing amatory pieces about 'dollar princesses'. The dollar princess of to-morrow may be the manufacturer of the same. The scribbler who dedicates his work to Maecenas in gratitude for doles received or in hope of doles to come may now see the day when Maecenas will crawl to him for assistance in launching a new oil corporation and perhaps name a well or two after his latest story or play.

The reason for this tilting of the social balance lies largely with the Western world. America has increasingly absorbed the European taste for the theatre. Its citizens have the play-going habit, and they are prosperous enough to pay heavily for a piece which they really want to see. The United States are so large that there may be concurrent productions in many cities at one time. A reading and play-going nation of a hundred millions with money in its purse is indeed auriferous territory for the man who can strike the lucky seam. In the matter of entertainment London and New York keep a vigilant eye upon each other, so that whatever has proved popular on one

## The Newest Rich

side of the ocean will almost certainly be given a good chance to do the same on the other. Moreover, the Dominions are providing an expanding market for the literary wares of the English-speaking capitals; they are not to any large extent self-maintenant in their letters and amusements, so that they, too, must anxiously watch London and New York and then import what seems to be in vogue. Continental nations also keep a close watch upon books and plays that are written in English, and are eager to acquire rights of translation or to read in the original that which has most widely appealed to Anglo-Saxon taste. The kinema comes in as a powerful and allied force working in the same direction. That is not merely because the picture-making companies are willing to pay extremely high prices for the privilege of translating into their peculiar idiom a book or a play whose fame has reached across the world. There is the more important fact that the kinema has broken through the barriers of the separate national or racial cultures and so made the forms of Western expression intelligible and even attractive to peoples hitherto shut off from any such commune with the outer world. The kinema, because of its powers of penetration, must tend increasingly to unify human modes of thought, and thus, while it is actually providing generously for the authors of to-day to satisfy its

## Now on View

needs, it is also preparing a market for the future domination of the English-speaking dealer in art or entertainment. The more one looks ahead the more does one see that the way is being made straight and smooth for the triumphal march of the newest rich.

The result of all this is disquieting. It means that the working of books and plays will assume more and more the likeness of a casino. Where the prizes are so vast the swarm of gamblers will multiply. That more people should be writing is naturally not a bad thing in itself, but the secondary consequences are dangerous. As the scramble for position grows in intensity it will be harder than ever for the kind of work which is quiet in intention and subtle in expression to make itself heard or felt. The more trivial novels are poured out by publishers who, like roulette players, will risk many failures in order to score *en plein*, the more chance there is of sensitive and sensible writing being swept out of notice by the cascade of trash. The menace is even more apparent in the theatre. It is commonly observed that what is wrong in London is the inflated rentals of the central playhouses. It is asked why these rentals remain so high when nine out of ten lessees lose their money. If the theatre were run on a normal economic basis like any ordinary industry there would be a 'hold-off' and theatres would stand empty

## The Newest Rich

until rents came down. But the theatre is not run like a trade ; it is run like Tattersall's ring. It is demonstrable that very few people do really well by backing horses at the prices offered by the bookmakers, but people will still go on gambling although the logic of the situation is against them. It is exactly the same with the London theatres. If a play which costs £1,200 a week to run can go on drawing £2,000 week after week, the promoters are plainly going to receive many hundreds per cent on their original investment. That only happens in one case out of forty or fifty, but the example of the single case is sufficient to keep the theatre on a gambling and therefore uneconomic basis. Accordingly the group that has ideas but only a tiny capital cannot afford to go into the inner ring at all.

Yet there are one or two hopeful aspects. Shaftesbury Avenue may play at being Monte Carlo, but there is an outer world of smaller theatres where a better spirit prevails. It is not infrequent now for a novel of genuine quality to enjoy the shattering popularity which a few years ago one would have attributed only to the more grotesque ferocities of melodrama and the more maudlin expressions of sentiment. One was happily surprised to learn that America had snatched greedily at Miss Sedgwick's exquisite story of *The Little French Girl*, and the world certainly did not

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make an obvious choice when it elected Miss Margaret Kennedy and Mr. Thornton Wilder to share with Miss Ethel M. Dell the kingdom that is paved with gold. Nor can the best-selling plays be always set down as the worst-written. The newest rich are in many cases earning their money in so far as that phrase is applicable to the kind of income that is now possible when a writer with 'a name' sets to work to exploit the situation. If the newest rich begin to feel embarrassed by bank balances that seem to be 'swellin' wisely' as though dieted, like the Wellsian characters, on the food of the gods, there are easy ways of shaking the nuisance off their sleeve. Our young dramatists with the thousand-pound look can always put their money back into other channels of that source from which it came; in which case Sadler's Wells might have the bricklayers in to-morrow, the Shakespeare National Memorial Theatre might adorn London within a year, and the business managers of repertory might have the unusual pleasure of looking the bank manager proudly in the face. Gold is distributable stuff, and the boards of the stage are remarkably absorbent material. The newest rich are as wealthy in opportunity as they are in their possessions.

### III. Masters of Arts      ∞      ∞      ∞

THERE will always be those who rail against authority in the arts, and nobody need grudge Thersites his right to an uproar. On the whole he earns his keep by touching our minds while he vexes our ears. To call a man 'a master', be the mastery old or new, is to rouse Thersites in a moment and he is not always improperly stirred. We ought to be jealous of that honourable term and not wanton in its use. Few artists die with it in their sure possession, but two have lately passed for whom the title was an admitted and an obvious justice and no fanciful decoration. Hardy, so often and so recklessly tossed on waves of abuse, had come into the calm waters. Sargent, the elusive, had been found beyond question. For the painter, long before his death, had reached an eminence to which all but the most fantastic type of criticism paid its respects. His work had been included in the National Gallery. He was, in short, established, and it was permissible to refer to him with a word at once vague and important—namely, as 'a master'. To define this kind of mastery is difficult, but its difficulty should not deter one from a task which is of considerable value for understanding the history both



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of art and of its criticism. To call a painter or any other executant of the arts 'a master' is not to put him beyond reach of question, but it does give him rank of a particular and potent order. He becomes a standard in his particular phase of activity ; to his work other work is referred, and by his work other work is judged. If he is a painter the various great galleries of the world consider the acquisition of his work to be a matter of necessity to their reputation rather than a luxury or a speculative adventure ; if he is a dramatist his plays pass into the world's repertory ; if a novelist his books will be found in manifold varieties of edition in the myriad humble bookcases which are one real repository of a national culture and by whose contents the nations may not unfairly be judged. If he is an architect his creation will not be assailed or threatened with destruction for new purposes of supposed utility except by people who feel no shame at incurring the guilt of the barbarian. To be a master of the arts in this unacademic sense is to pass from a fretful world of competition to fail in which may be to sink for ever in the limbo of a growing and finally of a general neglect. It is to know what Shakespeare proudly claimed without the knowledge, that marble will not outlive the powerful rhyme. Hardy and Sargent belonged to the happy minority who see the tremendous verdict



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given in their favour and given in their lifetime.

There can be no hard and fast lines. The master's degree is not formally awarded or by authority. It comes rather like the decision in a Quaker's gathering, where the presiding person takes the feeling of the meeting and there is no challenge nor mathematical computation of the shown hands. About many artists who hover on the verge of mastership the meeting has never declared itself. Thus, while Dickens is accepted with scarcely a demurring voice, Trollope may be described as standing at the door waiting for some decisive turn of favour to admit him before the roll of time and the ceaseless impetus of new creation drive him back from the threshold of a vast and wide esteem. Sometimes acceptance is delayed. Shakespeare, now by common consent the master among masters of drama and of poetry, did not strike his colleagues and his public as one not abiding question. He was liked for his affability and for his grace and wit in company, he won professional esteem for his speed and facility in meeting a manager's requirements, he was paid formal compliments for his honey-tongued verses, and Ben Jonson came out handsomely in posthumous praise. But the England of 1616 did not look up from its work or pleasure as though stricken by calamity when a burgess

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of Stratford died of the fever. Some knew that a master had finished his work : none that the master had spoken his last word. It was almost by accident that we have anything like a composite edition of his work. His reputation sank, then gathered slowly, and at last moved forward with the hesitant surge of a wave amid jostling rivals. But the wave made up its mind and reared to such a crest as letters have not elsewhere seen. The making of masters is not a process carried on by scientific methods or by strict precision. There are chances and changes, taste spins and reputation is caught upon the wheel, sometimes to be broken beyond repair. A painter, perhaps, is safer than a writer. Once his work is in the great galleries, where a niche is the equivalent of a mighty name, it is not likely to be turned away, though there may be a cellar as the containing vessel of lost causes. But the author and the dramatist may without intelligible cause be abandoned by a fickle public. The master's gown comes by a sudden gift and may be wantonly withdrawn. The arts have not escaped time's little ironies.

The thing works queerly, but not so queerly or so cruelly that we must imagine the spirit of the ironies to be ever triumphantly smiling across the false tilt of the scales of artistic and intellectual justice. There is rough equity, and sooner or later achievement wins

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understanding. The tragedy lies not in the case of the master who has never come by his proper rank, nor even in the case of him for whom the greater part of renown was posthumous. The genuine man of sufferings is he who has it in him to be a master, or at least to approach the fringe of that high company, and yet is held back by moral or physical weakness, by a blow of fate, or by the pressure of a numbing neglect. Men have cheated themselves of mastery by their own folly, but more must have been the victims of discouragement. Lacking strength or resources they could not keep the passion fresh. They gave it up, or they played down. The rest of us, the readers, the playgoers, and the lookers-on, have our share of the responsibility to face, since in the last resort the ordinary patron and not the highly specialized critic is he who awards the degrees. The responsibility is all the more difficult to carry in these days when the volume of production in the arts is so immense that the kind of ability which is too proud to take up the trumpet as well as the pen or the brush may be easily swept aside in the clamour and confusion of the hour. One way, and perhaps the best way, to honour the masters whose laurels are determined is to resolve that no more stripling masters shall be denied the fulfilment of their growth. Amid the shouting and scrambling of all the little sects of the arts it is easy to turn

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away a vexed and tired ear or eye, and it is certainly true that we have a hard task to discover genuine utterance amid the noise of the rolling of logs. But the labours of such vigilance must be endured, since a just tribute to an old master is the honouring and enjoyment of a new one.

#### IV. The Ibsen Girl

THE West End was so busy with its crook plays and musical comedies, of which categories it was offering four or five new examples every week, that it could not be expected to pay much attention to the Ibsen centenary. However, we did something in the way of matinées, and at the Everyman Theatre *Hedda Gabler* was put on for a run. The play was dressed in period costume, and probably that is the best way. *A Doll's House* is now unthinkable unless it is thus dated back. But *Hedda Gabler* is different. Nora could not possibly walk on to a stage of Coward or of Maugham. But Hedda could ; sometimes she does.

In his preface to three recent plays, *Home Chat*, *Sirocco*, and *This Was a Man*, Mr. Coward describes the last, which has been banned, as an extremely moral play. 'It purports to draw quite sincerely the tiresome fatuity of an attractive woman who has allowed her mind to become so saturated with sex-vanity that she is unable to derive any other pleasure in life beyond attracting men and contriving an endless series of liaisons, despite the fact that she possesses a husband who is infinitely more intelligent and attractive than

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the average ballroom nonentities for whom she risks her reputation.' Plainly Mr. Coward's Carol Churt is not Hedda, because she has that courage in misconduct which Hedda lacks; nor has she Hedda's range of malevolence or potentiality for absurd aesthetic raptures. But she is Hedda's kinswoman in so far as she is the wife who is ready to take all and give nothing, and who, in the end, after all her hedonistic calculations and ambitions, can create nothing of any size but her own boredom and despair.

It is natural to ask at a time of homage to Ibsen whether his career as an iconoclast has really prevailed. Mr. Shaw has warned us that the acceptance of Ibsen in the Pantheon might be the worst possible service, because 'the most effective way of shutting our minds against a great man's ideas is to take them for granted and admit he was great and have done with them'. That was a point which Mr. Shaw further emphasized in the epilogue to *Saint Joan*. Canonize the man or the maid and you kill the spirit. Ibsen's plays are no longer lightly discussed as 'bestial, cynical, disgusting, poisonous, sickly, delirious, indecent, loathsome, fetid, literary carrion, crapulous stuff, clinical confessions, putrid indecorum,' and so forth, in the grand manner of righteous indignation. As far as the European theatre is concerned, it is St. Henrik nowadays, and the

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critical vituperations of our time, which fall far below the standard set by that estimable and voluble defender of Catholic truth, Mr. Clement Scott, have passed on to Mr. Coward. Whether after forty years the customary reward of abuse will be realized and we shall all be chanting 'Noel, Noel' in the tones and postures of secular adoration, remains to be seen.

In the meantime we can fairly claim that Ibsen's campaign against ideals has, with the powerful aid of circumstance, achieved results. Nobody in English plays of contemporary life goes about holding up the banner of the ideal with the result that he makes himself ridiculous and other people miserable. There are no tremendous illusions about the splendour of this cause or the sanctity of that institution. The tyrannies of convention which lie like leaden clouds over the fjord-side parlours of the Ibsenites do not oppress the bright young people who go promiscuously a-wooing in the flats and studios of Mayfair. Nor do they have to make the idiotic pretence to which Hedda was driven by her incurable romanticism; they do not believe that vice itself can be an ideal, distinguished, beautiful, and immensely alluring. That point of view was given its chance in the nineties and has been very properly laughed out of mind. There are moments when Hedda Gabler seems to be the spiritual aunt of Aubrey

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Beardsley ; that is when she fosters her silly satanism and hell-fire attitudes, and in a performance at Hampstead Miss Laura Cowie gave a wonderful presentation of a Hedda half-bewitched by her vision of evil as Beardsley was amusingly inspired by his. It was scarcely a human Hedda that we saw, but a Strindberg woman who had wandered into an Ibsen play.

At any rate a Hedda of this demoniac quality would be impossible in any modern play of the bored and naughty wife. For she has size, and Mr. Coward's people always seem to be little. They are manikins who wander from one petty failing to another in a state of petty ennui and with the accompaniment of a neat but petty jocularity. Hedda would drive an imperious foot right through the surface of our modern pieces and shatter them to fragments. Therein lies the paradox. These modern manikins, whom Mr. Coward believes to be the types of our time, are amorous without being passionate, and enter into their intrigues with no illusions whatever. (*Sirocco* must be excepted, because that is a tale about a romantic young lady who found romance altogether too much for her.)

On the whole, however, the Coward characters are Ibsenites : they have no ideals, they worship no institutions, they go their own way. They have cleared their lives of all those mental entanglements and crushing loyalties against



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which Ibsen warned the world. But the result is disconcerting. They have cleared away so much that there seems to be nothing left. Once more the baby has been emptied out with the bath ! Ibsen, of course, had a faith behind his campaign of purgation. If you could clear the lies out of society and the idols (or ideals) out of the parlour the human will would be free to assert itself in shaping a life which would be full as well as free, and which would be active in its new state of enfranchisement. But what Mr. Coward shows us is a life that is free and empty. Hedda does as she cares and is still bored. Nora has her latchkey, her cheque-book, her vote, and her men friends, but she, who was once a human being in a doll's house, has become a doll in a human house. Yet we cannot put the blame on Ibsen, because we have got rid of the detested ideals without troubling to find a substitute, and have turned the actively romantic virago that is Hedda into the passive vacuum that is Mr. Coward's Carol Churt. According to Ibsen's command we have shed a number of illusions, and we are disillusioned with that promised land of disillusion.

The reason is, perhaps, that when Ibsen bade us be ourselves he was unduly optimistic about what we have it in us to become. He cleared the ground and ordered the master-builders to begin. But we are not all masters, and the jerry-builders have occupied the sites thus made.

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At least that is how one sees Ibsenism to-day if the drama of the moment can be taken as evidence. Ibsenism has won its negative victories ; the active are yet to come.

## V. Pantomemories



THAT diligent historian of pantomime, Mr. Willson Disher, gives to the institution rather more than 200 years of life in this country. Pantomime, continually described as dying, is, in fact, the hardiest of invalids. The more it is said to be on its last legs the more assuredly does it discover new wings, and Cinderella, like the Phoenix, rises continually from her own ashes. The head-quarters of pantomime change ; its heart slides into a new cranny of its ageless body, but the heart goes on beating, and, what is more, it beats in time with the Great Heart of the People. The secret of its success is its adaptability. The birds and beasts and man himself must change to live ; and pantomime has survived, and will survive, because its structure is not rigid and its makers are not pedants. They know the signposts of their times and follow the rolling English road.

The strength of pantomime has been that it had no strength : it is simply a mould which takes the impression of its time. Art-forms that are rigid are cast aside when the world becomes too clever or too stupid to enjoy them, when taste goes sharply forward, or when it doubles back upon its tracks. But pantomime endures with the dreadful tenacity of a jelly.

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Its surface took the impress of Italian buffoonery and of eighteenth-century airs and graces. In the age of English classicism it became a clown's dictionary of classical mythology. Harlequin Orpheus jostled Columbine Andromeda. Then came pantomime as topographical revue : *The Wonder of Derbyshire, or Harlequin in the Peak, Penmaenmaur, or the Wonder of Wales*, were typical of Covent Garden and Sadler's Wells about 1780. The romantic revival sent our poets seeking fancies from flower-bells, and a larger public seeking fun from fairy-tales. Thus, during the succeeding century, pantomime reflected a renewed interest in Sinbad and Cinders, Bagdad and Beanstalks, Red Riding Hood and Highgate Hill. The old heroes and heroines, who had been dangling on strings in street-corner puppet-shows, were recovered from this state of suspended animation ; they came back to be the new gods of Old Drury, and took flesh in generous form with the aid of such divas of the Lane as Miss Harriet Vernon.

Public entertainment at the close of the nineteenth century was dominated by the music-hall, and pantomime, impressionable as ever, took on the stamp of the street-corner types. The fairy lamps on Cinderella's coach were outshone by Bardolphian noses radiant amid widow's clothing. The lore of the gin-palace, pawnshop, and lodging-house was grafted in fullness of actuality upon the tender stem of

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fairy-tale. The music-hall was realistic, while the Harlequinade was fantastic. Since the music-hall and realism ruled, Joey and Pantaloon, the heirs of a tradition gone stale, were beaten out of the field by Twankey and the broker's men, the heirs of the new invention. Under the long and strong consulships of Leno and Campbell the new order reached the climax of its strength.

And so on to jazz and the accommodation of Aladdin with a ukelele and Sinbad with a saxophone. Did ever institution have so strong a digestion ?

Mr. James Agate, going in search of Prince Charming, once wrote, 'Some talk of Dan Leno and some of Herbert Campbell, but for me pantomime has always centred in such artists as Harriet Vernon, Ada Blanche, Marie Loftus, and Marie Duggan.' Let me confess that I cannot talk of any of them. To admit an ignorance of Dan may give one a pride of youth, but it may, in the eyes of my elders, imply sheer disqualification for mention of the word pantomime. This I deny, the Christmas revels being truly vulgar and as much dependent on the sixpenny public of the T.R., Coketown, as on any magnificoes of London. This wagon need not be hitched to any starry troupe. The asteroid aspect of the business has dwindled in recent years, but the game goes on. The pantomimes which I remember best were played in

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humble houses by humble folk now nameless in the mind. I recollect brokers' men who broke infinities of furnishing, prodigious Barons, brave players of Buttons, and marvels of Simple Simony. It is the part and not the player that glows in comfortable memory.

For most of the pre-Pan generation the first stage-play was pantomime. My initiation came by way of *Puss in Boots*, to whom I was introduced at the age of six. This being high festival I was asked what I would like for dinner before the matinée. I demanded sausages with a soul's sincere desire and with no precocious intention of being symbolic or striking the right note. Thus gorged I attended the rite of which I remember little except a vague suffusion of bliss. I believe that I conducted myself in all ways like a little gentleman. But one thing is definite. At the close the Marquis of Carabbas, superb amid attendant notables, announced from mid-stage :

We pledge you a bumper of sparkling champagne,  
And hope you are coming again and again.

Here was richness ! But by the way in which the entire company brandished their goblets I was a little puzzled. Why did not the champagne spill over ? Could it really be true that there was none—and Marquises about ? I questioned my escort severely and received

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tactfully equivocal replies. My heaven was a little faded. If the champagne was a fake, why not——? I suppose my career was in the forming, since dramatic critics are probably born disappointed.

My next vision is of *Red Riding Hood*, and that has always seemed to me a proper pantomime because there is the scene where the Dame keeps school and Simple Simon is the dunce, in mischief always and in stripes often, honest nonsense for all ages. Harlequinades I never loved and have never mourned. A Harlequinade with Harlequin left out would have been another matter. Clown, Pantaloon, and Policeman were good enough company for a while, but there had to be those silly intervals in which Harlequin and Columbine, who plainly had nothing to do with the case (petty larceny), pranced dismally about like futile time-wasting spectres at the sausage-feast. In any case Joey gets monotonous and, after short acquaintance, is of use only to ritualists and the high-brows who moan away about a grand philosophy of clownship. If only Harlequin had not been such a bore, the thing might have lasted a little better. But in any case the public opinion which rejected the Harlequinade was right. It was simply asserting a preference for the living and topical comedian with at least something of novelty to the moribund ceremonial of mirth. One has to be monstrously sentimental

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or a monstrous humbug to pretend that a hot poker never cools. As the Irishman might have put it, dead things must die.

The so-called 'grown-up' parts of a pantomime never bored me until I did grow up. I have no memories of distaste for sentimental balladry or the canvas horticulture of the transformation scene. When I was very young there was no Mr. Milne in action and I do not think that, at the age of seven or eight, I would have cared a jot for any of the Willie Walruses or Timothy Tits who now abound. Martin Rattler and the Young Fur-traders were my gods of romance and Waggles of *Chums* my notion of a funny fellow. Coming to *Peter Pan* rather late, I thought it to be three parts mush, and as for Captain Hook, well, I knew of better pirates. What about Gideon Lipchop and *The Rogues of the Fiery Cross*? At least one got them neat and not sicklied o'er with the pale cast of Wendyism. Why bore a boy with mopings about maternity? If it was the children who bought the seats and not the parents, how many years would Peter have lasted? It is a question worth serious consideration.

To write successfully for the puerile market in these days the essential thing is to evoke the words 'How Sweet!' from a middle-aged woman. That response sufficiently procured, the trick is done and the children will have to go



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through it. The children of to-day probably suffer less from compulsory sentiment, quaintness, and the like than the children of thirty years ago would have suffered under similar entertainment. It is the fashion nowadays to keep children backward for fear of forcing them so that great sturdy monsters can hardly read and are still in the plasticine age. I do not suggest that it was a happy nest in which John Stuart Mill became a full-fledged classic at the age of three, but I have no regrets that I was educationally pushed along and was reading fairly widely and ambitiously by the time I was six or seven. (I was once given plasticine and loathed the silly stuff.) There were no 'children's plays' for the grown-ups to drag us to in their lust for sweetness ; at least not in the provinces. We had pantomime, with balladry, transformation, and all, and we enjoyed every bit of it. It is the nature of a healthy and active child to want things above its age and ken. Of course the provincial pantomime had its mysteries beyond our minds, but, where understanding failed, what bliss there was in pretending to appreciate. This eager mannishness may be censured as hypocrisy ; that seems to me a smaller vice than is practised by those up-to-date parents who snatch the 'too old' book from their children and almost bully them into believing in fairies.

Thus I remember pantomime as the thing

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which I enjoyed with a kind of groping eagerness. One's mind was going out to great and worldly things. Here was no playing down to the dame's school child, which indeed I was. The fact that pantomime is 'too old' for children is the very best reason for taking them there. To have been hauled off to some fairy-land stuff with the implication that this was all I was fit for would have infuriated my young pride. No doubt the fact that it happened in a theatre would have given it some sort of fascination. But I wanted to go to the theatre as a theatre and not to the theatre with no tea in the milk. For those who think that Christmas is a time for giving children what they want instead of what the latest education-crank thinks they ought to want the common-sense procedure is to choose something completely unfit. The proper holiday outing courageously fills the young waistband with the indigestible, the young mind with the unsuitable, and the young breast with surging pride. No fears need appal the responsible adult, since youth and bliss, working together, are incomparable agents of eupepsia. To be more precise, the programme should be food and pantomime. The latter goes on because it is adaptable. It meets the public's changing wants. Within its conventions all the modes have been made welcome, all vogues and varieties of humour and of melody. Pantomime has successfully reflected

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the taste of the ordinary urban adult. Harlequinade would not change and the price of its pedantry was death. Because pantomime suited the adult, it entranced the child. And so it will continue to do, unless the reformers get hold of it and pack a new kind of Peterpantomime with sugary little notions of their own. When the mothers no longer look nervously to see whether young William is not understanding a little too much and can sit safely simpering and saying, 'How Sweet!' the game is up. The children's piece will have won the day and the children will have lost their day out.

## VI. When Brow Meets Brow ~ ~

WHO is High-brow, what is he? A hundred swains condemn him for every one that considers his essence and his quiddity. He is so often denounced, so rarely defined. Accordingly Mr. Leonard Woolf has done well to turn natural historian and bring to High-brow the Latinity, the classificatory gusto, and the observing eye of an august zoology. If some art-and-crafty workshop will now fashion a Chair of High-browism and Mr. Courtauld will suitably endow it and the Duke of Bedford will hand over a Bloomsbury Site, then Mr. Leonard Woolf should be there enthroned and committed to lecture seasonally on the nature and nobility of *Altifrons*.

The present excursion was started by an alarum-bell whose ringer was Mr. Gilbert Frankau. Mr. Frankau, it seems, thinks poorly of High-brow, a judgment which is sometimes reciprocated with a disdainful knob or two attached. I am unfortunate in lacking acquaintance with Mr. Frankau's fiction, which I understand to be rich in Human Interest. In the Press, however, I can read his pronouncements from time to time. From these I conjecture that he is magnificently John Bullish, a red-blooded, Anglo-Saxon he-man, a veritable John

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Peel who winds his horn and saddles his horse for the pursuit of all cranks, intellectuals, cosmopolitans, and other vermin. I picture him yoicking through life with the scalps of countless high-brows dangling at his waist. Let but one of those modern painters of ugly pictures leave his earth in Chelsea and Mr. Frankau will have his brush in no time. I lay down my paper blissfully convinced that while such a warrior is standing on the bridge we are all quite safe. The heathen cultures, the aliens and the intellectuals and the artists may rage, but they will not pass. But when I look at Mr. Frankau's photograph, which frequently accompanies his pronouncements, my knees are loosened. Can this be Nimrod and Horatius rolled into one? Is this the front of Jove to threaten and command? Can Philistia's Mussolini display so mild an eye? Surely not. He looks so kind, so wise. He might even be a crank, an intellectual, an artist.

Perhaps it was that air of blandness which encouraged Mr. Woolf to pop up and risk his skin by suggesting that Mr. Frankau's short way with high-brows may not be the last word in justice. But, before I had followed Mr. Woolf's defence of *Altifrons* very far, my instinctive dread of being on the weaker side began to vanish. I was finding myself with the huntsman and not with the prey. Nothing can be more reassuring to a timid man than to feel

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himself on the same side as Mr. Frankau. I suffered this happy conversion when Mr. Woolf began to argue that Time works for *Altifrons*; what high-brow thinks to-day low-brow thinks to-morrow, and the popular verdict in art and letters is reversed. 'Those who are hunted and derided for their opinions as high-brows are more often than not in the end justified by the opinions of their hunters.'

Is it as simple as all that? Of course, there are many instances where the high-brow critics have been right and the majority have come penitently to heel. But sometimes it works just the other way. Shakespeare pleased the ordinary play-goers of his time sufficiently to make a decent living and retire like a gentleman. But the succeeding high-brows announced that he was no good and set to work at civilizing his barbaric notions. Dryden, when he re-wrote *Troilus and Cressida*, making the lady faithful instead of false, observed that Shakespeare was 'scarce intelligible to a refined age'. He undertook bravely to remove 'that Heap of Rubbish under which many excellent thoughts lay buried'. Shakespeare was mauled and 'improved' for two centuries with much approval of the wise, and his chief rescuer was a common actor called Phelps, playing to common people at Sadler's Wells. High-brow cannot claim much glory from the history of Shakespearean drama.

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Mr. Woolf never discusses the countless instances in which the high-brow has been affected and shallow and has been promptly and properly neglected by posterity. When Shakespeare was an apprentice to the theatre the high-brows were playing with Euphuism. The Stratford man savoured the cult of conceits and was, for a moment, under the lure of natty verbiage. But his common sense rejected Euphuism and general opinion was on his side. High-brow had been making a pretty ninny of himself. Naturally we remember more easily the cases where the high-brows have been justified and a lonely voice has echoed down the centuries. But all the time high-browism has been starting hares most tragically mad and founding causes that were swiftly and justly lost. The public opinion of posterity acts with a mid-brow sanity ; it sifts before it saves and looks before it loves. It is neither as gullible as contemporary high-browism nor as crude and insensitive as contemporary low-browism. While Jack Sprat will have no fat in High-brow Hall and Sprat's minions will have no lean in the servants' hall, a subsequent common sense proclaims a balanced diet. There is the famous case of Castle Bunthorne. When the high-brows of the eighties were carrying flowers in their medieval hands, the black-and-tan young man was blind to the delicate allure. Now we have put our surveyors into Castle Bunthorne

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and we know what it was worth as an outpost against Philistia. We have a prudent notion as to how much of it was sound and how much of it was simply silly. High-brow is not entirely discredited, but we have brushed the bloom off his pretentious lily. Mr. Woolf's gentle persuasion will not work. High-brow is time's fool quite as often as he is time's fortunate legatee.

But, it may be argued, we have not yet defined High-brow. Mr. Woolf does define him and does it with great detail and assurance. But his definition is far too generous. He has a category, for instance, of *Altifrons altifrontissimus*, who turns out to be the man who applies his reason to the world. Bentham is quoted as a specimen. If Jeremy is in this class and we are all high-brows when we try to hammer out the best way of making people happy, then I am a clamorous candidate for admission to the order. The English Utilitarians have been consistently maligned by people who never tried to understand them, and the rabble of mystics and sentimentalists have now so confused the mistakes (which the Utilitarians undoubtedly did make) with their methods and their ambitions, which were sensible and humane, that it is not easy to restore any justice to Jeremy and his men. Bentham has always appeared to me the most rational of low-brows. He sincerely wanted to see people



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happy instead of being racked by creeds and cultures imposed upon them by frauds and uplifters in surplices and out of them. He told them to stick to push-pin if they liked it better than poetry. Push-pin is, unhappily, an unknown source of ecstasy to me, but I feel myself a potential hedonist in its courts. Certainly I am a Benthamite, without prefix or suffix, in so far as I prefer a round of golf to a Dublin Odyssey and a pewter pot to a Gertrude Stein.

Mr. Woolf hides away the fussy little pretenders under the title of *Pseudaltifrons* and thinks them unimportant because uncommon. This is cowardly. Of course, if we say that high-brows are just sensible people who like to use their wits, and that the others are not high-brows at all, we must all be on Mr. Woolf's side. But the noisy and the numerous element in the high-brow camp are the very people who declaim against reason. The true intellectual of these days is the man who despises the intellect. The new French dramatists are cried up because they distrust the mind, and Pirandello because he destroys it. Psychology deems us to be no masters of our purposes but slaves of instincts which are accidental. This is no company for *Altifrons Altifrontissimus*. Bentham would have blown all these dithering doubts out of the room and set to work on a 'Push-pin for the People' campaign. But it is the fussy crowd who have a new ism buzzing

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weekly behind their grandiose brows who are the real nuisance. They first absorb ideas without power to analyse or relate them and then announce them with a gravity as dark as their sombrero hats. Mr. Woolf cannot hide them up his sleeve ; their high-pitched voices will penetrate his thickest tweed and their scrambles for position will bring them jostling all over his desk. When they are out and about and their shrill chatter about the latest foreign fake is dinning in my ears, I find myself demanding a passport and visa for Philistia. Or, if I be dubbed a Philistine national already, I must apply to Mr. Frankau for a gun-licence and a share in his next shoot.

## VII. Our Rude Forefathers      ∩      ∩

THE celebration of the centenary of Henrik Ibsen has evoked a fair number of pious tributes and of salaams to a memory now permitted even by the most John-Bullist to be immortal. Yet it is less than forty years ago that London rang with the echoes of the most filthy language, all caused by the same Ibsen whose dramas are now considered to be not only inoffensive but cleansing and are securely-established in the curriculum of even a moderately liberal education. After the first performance of *Ghosts* in England in March 1891 the *Daily Telegraph*, as Bernard Shaw reminds us, compared the play to 'an open drain, a loathsome sore unbandaged, a dirty act done publicly or a lazar-house with all its windows open'. 'Bestial, cynical, disgusting, poisonous, sickly, delirious, indecent, loathsome, fetid, literary carrion, crapulous stuff, clinical confessions, gross and almost putrid indecorum', were all phrases applied to the piece, and the anti-Ibsenites in other quarters called out for all manner of prosecutions and persecutions. Mr. Shaw himself was called a 'muck-ferreting dog' for his activities as a champion of the new drama, and Mr. Grein, who had been

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responsible for producing *Ghosts* was cut by his friends in the street.

What must seem so curious to the young men and women of to-day is not that an austere product of the human reason like *Ghosts* should have been thought poisonous by a man of Catholic and Conservative feeling like Clement Scott, but that there should have been all this puerile loss of temper and portentous spilling of words. What is still more curious is that our own generation, which does not brawl in argument or fall into those apoplectic orgies of abuse which Clement Scott considered to be the proper armoury of a Christian Gentleman Defending his Young from the pagan pestilence that was Ibsen, should be dubbed bad-mannered. If there ever was a time when controversy in England was conducted in a mild, meek, and mannerly style, it is surely our own. This business of calling anybody whose views you dislike a leper no longer exists as far as people of any standing or repute are concerned. The anti-Ibsenites, who drew their critical vocabulary so largely from the art and craft of sanitation, were accepted as great men of the day. They were people of standing and repute. Clement Scott's position in dramatic criticism was almost pontifical. That is, for us, the great Victorian joke.

On the whole, we can now boast that the practice of criticism has abandoned the terminology

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of the sanitary engineer. Is it too much to hope that we are really growing up since we no longer pull faces and spit out dirty words like urchins in a rage? There are still some artists with the power to provoke. Jacob Epstein, the sculptor, is a case in point. His preoccupation with the uncouth vigour inherent in the mass and rhythms of primitive design has driven a few of the academic heavy-weights to splutter about Bolshevism and to discover under the rugged bronzes of Epstein the Marx of the beast. The hand may be the hand of Jacob, but the corruption is the villainy of Karl. Jazz, occasionally, elicits some mutterings about the sinful saxophone and the fatal howl which bodes the entrance of decay. Moscow is an easy label to put on any artist's baggage, and bill-sticking of this kind is a fairly common occupation of the slapstick critics. Why the musical modes of the negro as passed on to Europe through the orchestration of New York Jews should have any connexion with the somewhat dreary economic theories of a mid-Victorian German it is hard to explain. But professors, after all, are not there to answer impertinent questions. They are there to profess.

Still, when we have made all allowances for the anti-Muscovite enthusiasm of a few, the fact remains that English social life is becoming as peaceful as a popular artist's notions of

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sunset in Surrey and as well-behaved as a tea-party in the suburbs. Managers of theatres do occasionally drive critics from the doors, but, when the matter is investigated, it turns out that the critic's offence is not to have run to the lazar-house for his similes but merely to have failed in that degree of urbane flattery now expected as a right by the consuls of drama and emperors of the entertainment industry. Not long ago we had all the makings of a first-class shindy over the film called *Dawn*, which concerns the death of Nurse Cavell. The film was attacked and banned on the ground that it was bound to rouse passions better left sleeping. It was defended on the ground that it was a noble exposure of war in general and not of war as practised by the wicked Germans in particular. As the fruits of much labour and expenditure were at stake, and the motives of those who made the film were under question, one would have thought that the contest might have been conducted with all the verbal high explosive of the roaring nineties or even of the war itself. Both sides, however, instead of emitting poison-gas, became vehemently righteous and charitable, and the gutters of London from Wardour Street to Fleet Street flowed with the milk of human kindness and the cream of international amity. It is true that one by-product of the affair was a somewhat acid correspondence between Lord Birkenhead

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and Mr. Berkeley, who wrote the captions. But neither ran to the lazar-house for metaphorical inspiration or called in the plumber to enrich his vocabulary. The fact must be admitted. The grand peaks of intolerance once climbed by the Victorians are altogether beyond our powers. The peculiar brand of virtuous indignation, which ransacked the refuse-pile for its adjectives, has passed away like whiskers and button-boots and hansom cabs.

There are still small-town councillors who cry aloud against paintings of 'the all-together'. There is still the British brand of Comstockery and the British brand of Main Street morals. But the splendid vituperations have vanished. We may be less than our forefathers, but we are certainly not as rude. A slender capacity for dismissive gesture appears to linger on in the poetic family of Sitwell, and Osbert, of that ilk, is mightily pleased with his own courage in taking the high line. Not long ago he told the world (in the preface to a play written by himself and his brother) all about his personal squabbles and of how he refused to shake hands with a critic who had disparaged his work. Osbert passed the wretch over with an Olympian chastisement, but I doubt whether the victim of the rebuke trembled unto his knees as being in the presence of thundering Jupiter himself. I surmise that he only smiled at a poor last

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Georgian effort to hurl the literary levin of Victorian times. We have no good heirs to the Whistler tradition of brawling and backbiting round the hen-coops of the Muses. Criticism stands under menace of the law of libel, which is applied with so severe a hand that to indulge in rudeness is an amusement that has to be paid for in staggering court fines. Editors simply will not print the kind of fumings and spumings with which Clement Scott beslavered the Ibsenites, and, even if they would, there are fortunately not many writers whose verbal imagery depends so largely on the dunghill as did that of our paternal moralists. These ancients were busy forty years ago defending English Respectability against that supposed antichrist of Christianity whose centenary has seen him universally canonized as Saint Henrik. While we smile now at their tantrums and their mouthings, we must admit ourselves utterly beaten in the boyish game of verbal bastinado and in the application of foul language to the fine arts. And yet people talk of those civil, prim Victorians !



# THE SPORTING LIFE

## I. Rewards and Fairways      ~      ~

IT had to be. The Championship golf courses of to-morrow will be surrounded by a zinc fence punctuated by turnstiles. Barbed wire and broken bottles will adorn the summit of this barricade and, while the patient queues line up at the pay-gates, our adventurous youth will tear its hands and trousers by endeavouring to go over the top. Others, more ingenious, will stoop to conquer, burrowing under the palisade in the intervals of dodging authority. At the end of it the spectator will be able to see the top of Slogger's swing on one tee of the eighteen. And he will be very happy. There seems to be no discomfort which the modern Englishman will not endure in order that he may pay for a spectacle and then not see it.

Golf is getting well into the swing of modern athleticism. You may pass a sentimental sigh, if you will, over the old and happy days when a man scuttled off from the office and picked up a championship or made a record between lunch and tea on Saturdays. Farewell to such trifling. If he wants now to be one of a chosen

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eight he must practise and train systematically. Before long every golfer will take out a masseur as well as a caddy and undergo treatment before every drive. Part of the new national electricity scheme will surely put a 'vibro' installation at each tee-box. The links are in chains. Like Rousseau's natural man, they were born free, but they have come to the same end.

Man's purpose nearly always outpaces his institutions. Our civic and parliamentary procedure lags about a couple of centuries behind our needs. And so with sport. We still go on pretending that there is one class of person called amateur and another called professional, and that between them is a great gulf fixed. Yet the gulf is bridged almost daily as a cricketer or golfer or footballer slips from one side to the other. The social distinction is thus admittedly nonsense. Two county captains, playing first-class cricket last summer, began their careers as professionals, and at least two prominent professionals began their careers as amateurs. The Australian cricketers always come over here with amateur status, but it is common knowledge that they have their reward. At all events, we know that to be an Australian amateur cricketer is to be amatory in no other way. Like soldiers and sailors on duty bound, they must leave their wives behind them. Celibacy of the cricketer has not been imposed as a life sentence—it is merely a temporary

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ordinance. No doubt the great measure will follow, and the new priesthood of the popping-crease will be forbidden a spouse till they have abandoned the sport.

Why do we keep up this out-moded pretence of a double status in games ? If we intend to take a serious part in these international contests—Test matches, Davis Cups, Walker Cups, and all the rest of them—we must have specialists to do it. The specialist is, in essence, a professional. He may, by an accident of birth, combine a good eye with a full purse and so be able to give his whole time to an occupation for which he refuses to draw money. Or he may by one device or another derive an income from the fringes of the game instead of from its central fact ; that is to say, he may be a golfing journalist or cricket club secretary, or give his name to a brand of tennis racket. But is a man of means who gives his whole life to golf less professional in spirit than a poor man who lives by the game ? Indeed, the so-called amateur has greater chances of proficiency because he has not to waste his time selling clubs and teaching the unteachable at three-and-sixpence a time.

The need of the specialist is particularly obvious in the case of tennis. We are not going to hold our own or recover lost prestige at Wimbledon unless all our promising youngsters of both sexes give up their lives to

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the business and become spiritually professional. They must play all through the winter and play in the best company. This means, if we retain the amateur-professional distinction, that they must be people of complete leisure and considerable income. There are only two logical attitudes to take up about this : you may say let Wimbledon and Walker Cups go hang ; or you may welcome the specialist and extend his number by paying him or her for being what they really are—whole-time workers in an industry.

Meanwhile, a foolish and snobbish effort is made to pretend that amateurs are still amateurs and must guard their status from the infection of professionalism. The thing has long been a farce in cricket, and is becoming a farce in tennis. In golf the farce is less obvious because a man can really play a first-rate game on a normal allowance of week-ends and holidays. But the whole trend of modern athleticism is going against the week-end golfer : systematic training and practice are the thin end of a professional wedge. Therefore, instead of accepting the old humbug about social distinctions and the taint of money, the nation must decide whether it wants to have plenty of international champions or whether it wants to retain the old idea of a game as a game and to declare pot-hunting to be no business for a gentleman.

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Personally, I can see no possible disgrace about playing games for money. To hit a ball so skilfully that your fellows will pay to see you do it is an occupation at least as admirable as buying something cheap and selling it dear. There is no outdoor game which does not contribute to the beauty of life as well as to its mere excitements. I subscribe to the Ibsenite doctrine that a man should do what he can do well instead of fumbling with what he cannot because it sounds respectable. Better a good paid golfer than an incompetent, unhappy clerk. I know all the old arguments about professionals playing for themselves and not for the team. Sometimes they hold and sometimes they do not. When people are slanging the professional spirit they should remember that without paid athleticism we might never have seen Vardon on the links or Hobbs at the wicket. Does anybody seriously believe that the world would be a better place if Vardon and Hobbs had driven pens and bargains behind a counter all their lives? Of course not. And that admission makes senseless the lingering effort to divide the athletic world into completely separate camps of gentlemen and players. That world abounds more and more in border-line cases, which means hard verdicts, fierce heart-burnings, and a general waste of time and temper. If the matter is to be cleared up the nations must act together. They can,

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in the long run, act only in one way. They can decide that the athletic specialist is really a professional, whether he actually takes money for his job or not ; that he is none the worse a man for that ; and that one ' pro ' is just as good as another—if he plays as well.

## II. The Gloom of Games

IT is a common criticism of popular journalism that it is flippant: my own complaint is that it is so stupendously solemn. One peculiar feature of the newspaper is its curiosity. It cannot record the simplest event without being shaken by portentous doubts. Its news-columns are a series of notes and queries. And such queries! They are rooted in morality and flower in philosophy. Questions of national importance burst upward from a golfer's divot. It may be worth while to record the fact that, on entering the High Fliers' Club last night, the popular Snort girls threw a brace of grape-fruit at Toni, the esteemed master of cuisine and ceremonies. But what journal of scope and spirit would rest content with such a meagre chronicle? A grave moral issue would immediately be raised and archbishops would opine that tossing the grape-fruit is (or is not) a symptom of international decadence. Proconsuls would retort that grape-fruit contain the seeds of Imperial Unity and that to treat them with a lavishness more proper to confetti is to strengthen the bonds of Empire and to drive home the vital point that trade follows the flapper. It is not the silliness of such journalism but the seriousness

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which appals. It is never content to raise a laugh without raising an ethical conundrum, and it only goes to a night-club with one eye on the popular Snort girls and the other on heaven itself. The result is a staggering compost with the proprietor's loyalties equally divided between gossip and Galilee. The Fleet Street of to-day hardly knows whether it leads to the Old Bailey or the New Testament, and its wretched labourers are hustled from the nice gustation of a crime to the duties of a cure of souls.

The horrid passion for being portentous has passed from night-clubs and criminal trials to the fresh air and the play-ground. The dreary Test Matches of 1926 became a test of every one's endurance. They hung over England as the menace of an exam. hangs over unhappy youth. Long before the Australians had played their first match we were tired of reading about them. Every ball and stroke had to be as momentous as a world-war or a bishop taken in adultery. The 'ashes' blinded our eyes, choked our throats, and stained the green fields with the ethics of their dust. There were moments when one felt that national sanity could only be restored by choosing Harry Tate (instead of Maurice) to bowl for England. When the giants of golf and lawn-tennis unpack their baggage they have to unpack their hearts to the public and become the



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origins of those grave issues for which the Press is hungrily waiting. The infantile fuss about decadent Oxford is a hint of what we may be in for if an English golfer should miss a short putt at a critical moment. Must our shows be as solemn as all that? The American golfers may be painting English greens with their demonstrative haberdashery while they turn our 'five' holes into 'threes', thus combining the aspect of the peacock with the way of an eagle. Meanwhile the popular Press, with its daring intellectual drive and relentless passion for novelty, will be asking 'Is England Done?'

In France there is now a Ministry of Sport; the Germans are applying all their energy and thoroughness to athletics. Spectacular sport is a matter which has so developed as to be a civic concern of the first importance. It involves high finance and has a large influence on public taste and conduct. It is a powerful rival in the industry of entertainment, and fights with the theatre and kinema and the dance-palace for its share of the people's pocket-money. A showman like Mr. Cochran will engage a virtuoso of the boxing-ring or of the theatre with equal willingness; he himself can appreciate a Duse as well as a Dempsey, and both are raw material for his craft. He has been instrumental in the promotion of lawn-tennis from the garden to the grand-stand and

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the arena. Naturally the transition from game to spectacle means the end of amateurism ; but the break is not a clear one. There is usually an interval of ' shamateurism ' marked by an outbreak of snobbery, humbug, and various accusations of fraud and deceit. But, where the interests of amphitheatre and arena come first, ' shamateurism ' must pass eventually into an honest professionalism.

The rhythm of this change appears to be constant in human society. Sport on the large scale begins with devotion and ends with dividends. It is born amid ritual and proceeds to ' record gates '. The games and races which were dedicated to the honour of a buried hero or an immortal god are turned into a secular industry. It was so with the Olympian games, and Euripides, when he mourned the debauching of Hellas by professional athletes, was simply talking like any good old codger of to-day who breaks the pen-nibs of his club in violent rhetoric against the salaried goal-getter. The chariot race which honoured the hero became the industry of Domitian's Rome. First read the Iliad and Æneid ; then read Juvenal and Martial. The passage from the sacred game to the unholy gamble is as plain here as it is in the history of the theatre, which opens with pious and primeval ceremony and proceeds to the profiteering syndicate. Among spectacles the kinema is unique (and to its

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infinite loss), because it never had a pious childhood and was born straight into the world of wealth.

As human societies grow larger, spectacles increase in costliness and breadth of appeal. The experience of recent years has been that you cannot have too grand a grand-stand. Put on the show, put up the seats in their myriads and myriads will expensively sit in them. That is the history of Lord's, Wimbledon, and Twickenham. The tree-lined, tented playing-field is becoming a thing of the past, and is being replaced by the black immensities of stadium and amphitheatre. Even golf, hardest of games to imprison thus, is becoming a gate-money affair.

There is no harm whatever in watching a game. Who is debauched by watching a Tilden in all the furious accuracy of his drive, or by following round the course the easeful efficiency of an Abe Mitchell? It is not the spectacle that matters but the eternal fuss about the spectacle, the false dramatizations, and the intolerable interpellations of ethics and politics. Let us keep our eyes on the ball instead of raising them to heaven. The modern tendency, at least under dictation of the modern Press, is to have no boundaries. Nobody can play in his own corner; everything must be dragged out as matter for generalizations, inquiries, and debates. There

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must be eternal comparisons between old and new, scoldings and railings and lamentations. If an Oxford man is slower than a Cambridge man by a fifth of a second over a hundred yards, then a thousand thousand Englishmen must know the reason why. The newspapers' readers are insured against death and the victims are insured against tranquillity. Every sporting defeat must have its inquest, and coroner's law in this case insists that the best qualification for a witness is that he should know nothing of the case.

If our men fail at the net before the thunderbolts of American lawn-tennis, dean and dancer are called upon for counsel and the honour of the nation is volleyed backward and forward between an optimist of the stage and a pessimist of the pulpit. The English theatre has a supply of constant hot water all the year round, but in the summer-time it acquires some fellowship in tribulation. For now every sport is raised to the level of state-craft and a fozzled drive may be a matter for a Royal Commission. The industrious moralists plough our green fields and sow a crop of gigantic national problems. Or are we going to absent us from solemnity a while, abjure the midsummer madness of high debate, and celebrate the next season of sport by becoming just a trifle sane ?

### III. Riders to the Snow

WHEN snow comes to London it is usually in the form of a transient abomination. People who travel in unwarmed, uncleansed, and eternally unreformed suburban trains spend a little longer than usual in their limbo owing to seasonal delays. They have, therefore, longer to study in the newspapers the advertisements announcing the roseate raptures attainable in such locomotion and to reflect upon the new idealism of railway-directors, who spend the passenger's money upon literature instead of upon lamps, soap, and other material trifles. Once in town the traveller discovers urchins pelting each other with mud in a far from tacit understanding that when snow is about all missiles are legitimate. A few aesthetes become ecstatic about the jolly novelties of outlook on whitened roofs and domes, while the Philistine, plodding through slush and liberally sprayed with filth by passing buses, churlishly wonders where the exquisite fun comes in.

Once a year, however, the snow is so liberal in its visitation and so sharply escorted on its way by frost, that there is a certain amount of fun to be had along with the filth. Hampstead and other open and hilly spaces annex,

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in a rough and democratic way, the proud prerogatives of Switzerland, and home-made toboggans are reclaimed from garden-shed or hastily 'run up' by the family handy-man. To the slopes of Parliament Hill the commons are so inordinately faithful that darkness is no deterrent ; far into the nights of a snowy week-end the roar of an unwonted traffic, the cat-calls of exultation, and, more occasionally, the moans of the wounded are to be heard. Parliament Hill is not, I suppose, much of a substitute for St. Moritz. Its sides are rough, but whether a man choose to propel himself towards Highgate or Gospel Oak, he can enjoy about a quarter of a mile of violent motion. Once when I was a spectator of these revels, a large winter-sportsman, careering alone upon a home-made vehicle, kept shouting 'Orl Free. No Ruddy Rent. 'Ere gows'. He had got to the root of the matter. It was the commoners' carnival in which a collision was a greeting and hard knocks were no impediment to neighbourly relations. It was gruelling and, more important, it was gratuitous.

The Londoner is very good at this kind of thing. He takes with immense avidity to the pleasures that come in scramble-sort, to Derby Day, to the Boat Race, to Bank Holiday jostling and to similar anarchies of entertainment. The arrival of winter-sports has the added delight of being quite uncalendared.

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Nobody knows when the chance will come. Nobody is ready. So, when the snow falls and lies, there is a riot of improvisation. The toboggan is banged together out of packing-cases and old iron. The toboggan may collapse at the first impact and, since few can steer, many must crash. But what invention has made, invention can repair. On the top of the hill the unquenchable takers of a chance have dumped a load of wood and metal, and repair your old vehicle or construct a new one while you wait. You do not wait long. There is no Amalgamated Society of Sledge and Toboggan Makers jealously to guard the speed of output ; there is no sudden downing of hammers because a carpenter has been caught trespassing in metal workers' territory.

To have anything which is not a hideous accident, like illness or unemployment, fall upon him unheralded is a rare delight for a Londoner. The popular newspapers, which are supposed to record the past, despise so humble an occupation and spend their efforts on invading the future. No sooner has a thing begun to happen than it is 'dead' in Fleet Street and your spry journalist is only concerned to state what people will be doing next year. Soon after Christmas we have already been told what will win the Lincolnshire and Grand National (to be run two months hence), and omniscience begins to discuss next summer's



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Derby when the big two-year-old races are run in the autumn. The dates on the top of certain popular journals bear no conceivable relation to their day of issue. The fashion sheets discuss Ascot fashions for ladies booted and furred, Christmas numbers appear in early November, and before long they will have eaten their way back into the cricket season. The Test Matches of the next tourney are discussed until we are sick of them in advance. How can a man enjoy a surprise in this world of tyrannous vigilance and interminable prophecy, where the forelock of time is being eternally wrenched and twisted by a myriad grabbing hands? But London's winter sports come as a bolt from the fog. The papers have not been telling us for three months what snowy things to wear and do. We are freed from their dreadful knowingness. We are released from all instruction. We improvise.

There are all sorts at Hampstead. A few superior persons go plodding in lonesome splendour on ski. They have little of the Alps but the uniform and the apparatus, and they make a brave show to remind the vulgar that they once booked through to Murren. There are the family parties who prudently keep themselves to themselves by secluded glides. And there is the great mob who press where the press is thickest and hurl themselves into what is, quite literally, the carnage as well as



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the carnival. Given several hundred toboggans careering across a limited space from many angles, steered more by faith and fury than by any principle of guidance, manned usually by what Thisbe called the 'brisky juvenals', having in their course to leap hollows and carry hummocks, and ending up frequently in full tilt against a palisade—given this you may start sending for the ambulance without more ado. To be rolled off one's own contraption and then hurled out of the track by the metal-shod runners of the one behind is to risk serious damage. The local hospital has a busy week-end. The more casualties are cleared the more volunteers hurl themselves into the frosty ardours of the escapade. This Switzerland business has come to London and democracy is going to see it through, safety first or safety last.

Logic suggests the formation of some discipline, a kind of sledge-control with decent intervals between the birth of each new trip. But the Englishman on holiday does not care for logic. He likes in summer-time to jump into the sea anywhere without asking timid questions as to tides and currents. Your Frenchman organizes sea-bathing on heavily protective lines as though to separate himself by a yard from Dieppe were to attempt the Channel. So, I am sure, would a similar winter crowd of Frenchmen have been marshalled by a hundred gendarmes, all vigilant

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with whistles and schedules of instruction. And wisely, there being no conceivable merit in breaking a leg for the sake of joining the dance. But Hampstead, anarchic to the end, prefers to ride dangerously. Will the old gentlemen who waste the note-paper of deaneries or genteel hotels in censuring our craven youth please note that our young brigade go into their sports as gallantly as Mr. Pickwick took to ice and indeed at such a tempo that only the reporting style of Mr. Jingle himself could do justice to the concourse of flesh, wood, and iron upon the stricken fields of Parliament Hill ?

#### IV. The Best Game to Watch



MR. BERNARD DARWIN, who recently compiled an anthology of games and the open air, could find nothing to include about Rugby football as we know it. He took a passage about the Eton wall-game, a sporting curio whose chronicles can be of interest only to those who have done and suffered in that kind or have observed the battle from above. He also drew on *Tom Brown* for an account of Rugby's formidable parent-game, that long-drawn tourney of mass and muscle. Then 'Rugger' was a wreckful siege of battering days, with goals invested by multitudes and with a sway of turbid combat, like the sweep and surge of Homeric armies on the plains of Troy. The literature of our shorter, sharper, and more skilful game is small, which is at once a pity and a mystery. The swing of a cricket-bat has set dozens of mighty pens on the move and the crack of an off-drive has long been the signal which summons prose and poetry into action. Boxing has ever been a fancy of the 'littery gent', but the superb clash of strength and of speed, of cunning and of endurance on the 'Rugger' ground is a drama whose criticism has been of the occasion, often

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journalism at its best, but dismissed by the anthologist as perishable goods.

Mr. Squire once hymned the University match, and rightly. Why should our sons of Pindar be always at Lord's and never at Twickenham? If one is right to find splendour in a game, is not January as good a month as June? Things that find cellarage in the mind, there to ripen and delight, may as easily come from the touch-line as from the boundary. Under July scorchings I can be home-sick for the mud, remembering things ancient and modern, the elfin figure of Arthur Young streaking through some misty afternoon, the playboy temerities of the pre-war Harlequins, a last great plunge of Scottish forwards betrayed by their backs, the organized audacity of the last 'All Black' team, or some mad scamper of bedevilled Irishmen, infantry turned cavalry in the grinding stress of 'five minutes more'. As much as music or Macartney may such things vibrate in the memory. 'The run-stealers flicker to and fro'—are not the wraiths of the try-stealers to have as much of ghostly perpetuity?

Anyone who cares for Rugby football must be getting tired of 'incidents'. Unfortunately our recollections of recent big matches are not unstained. Thus a rather poisonous mist is hanging over fields that should be the cleanest and the greenest in the land. We shall look

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to the referees to dissipate that cloud by the exercise of a most peremptory discipline. Rugby is a game which is played at a bustling pace, and creates, as no other game does, congested areas of striving humanity. Accordingly it provides unparalleled opportunities for the man with a load of mischief, and the mischief makers have got to be brought to order. The referees have ample powers if they choose to use them, and the time has obviously come for 'larnin' some players to be toads.

But it will be a pitiful day when we are reduced to setting stools of correction round the ropes at Twickenham, or to seeing a game ended by teams of six a-side because the others have all been dismissed from office for excess of zeal. The prospect of Rugby sides dwindling like the nigger boys in the rhyme, because ban of exile has been lavishly and justly pronounced, is quite insufferable to those who believe that this is one of the noblest of British games. 'Rugger' is the best exercise for youth that British athleticism has to offer. It is none of your dilatory sports that take half the week to reach no conclusion, nor is it, like baseball, the vulgarization of a good idea. Londoners could see the elect of the American baseball world at Chelsea not long ago, and those of us who attended watched some amazing feats of speed and skill. But the game is ungracious, and the frenzied antics of the

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'Rooters' are symptomatic of a spirit to which the urbane self-discipline of sportsmanship is entirely alien. The uniform is ugly, the noise is ugly, and the great padded gloves of the fielders into which the ball goes 'plonk' as into a suet pudding, are uglier still. The rush and scramble of baseball provide not the poetry but the free verse of motion. It smacks of the amphitheatre, the turn-stile and the special edition.

Far otherwise with Rugby, to which the amphitheatrical atmosphere is a novelty, and not altogether a good one. I have no objection to amphitheatres, whether they be natural, as at Epsom, or artificial, as at Wembley, but that is no reason for liking the Stadiumization of other fields. The vast increase of crowds at Rugby football matches is proving oppressive to the spirit of the game, and may be an incentive to the kind of play that gives the Press the 'incidents' it so much enjoys.

What, after all, was the best game we ever played in or ever saw? To many this would bring a memory of uncrowded fields, where none but a row of boys bawled lustily along the ropes. A high kick into touch would send the ball crashing through the delicate tracery of the stripped elm-branches, and a mist would creep up from the river, past the fives-courts, so to envelop bleak buildings loved and loathed. A red shaft of wintry sunlight would just

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sufficiently illumine the last five minutes of the relentless tussle, in which a school went up and a school went down, and there were no 'incidents'.

Dearest of the larger matches is surely that University conflict in December, played with an extreme of pace and vigour and with scarcely even an 'infringement'. Here the audience is as well worth watching as the game. Every young breast is flaming with partisan fires, but youth is equally determined to give nothing away in bad manners. No cry but a formal antiphony of 'Oxford-Cambridge' goes up, and everywhere there is repression of the passion which such a game between such sides must create. This is the grand assembly of the Forsyte commonwealth, the parade of the self-possessive class. As the crowd disperses one hears neither revilings nor gloatings; equanimity is all. However, there are time-limits; Forsytism has its peculiar compartments of conduct. But to dinner-time do the gods inherit; the rest is all the fiend's. There are vine-leaves in the hair and Vine Street in the offing. . . . But we are talking of Rugby. Yet before we leave the Forsytes let us remember that coloured tipster, familiar at race-courses, who mistook the University match for a raree-show, and came in full panoply to sell 'long-shot doubles' to the departing supporters of either blue. This

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confusion of Twickenham with Alexandra Park struck Forsytism to the quick. If looks could have killed, Mr. Tipster would have suffered ten thousand bullets in his vile body. But tipsters are of sterner stuff.

Twickenham is a sobering frame for the bright battlescapes we put there. The man with a stiff upper lip is everywhere about it. So much is it a middle-class institution that the ebullient instincts are smothered at the gate. A spectator of 'Rugger' in London has no kinship with the 'Soccer' fan; he retains his private life. Beyond the occasional shout, the discreet waving of a hat, he will not betray the agonies or ecstasies of strife. He will not sing, nor eat 'hot dogs'. His lips are guarded though his heart beat strong. Twickenham is a last fortress of the Forsytes, and when the Welshmen come they seem to feel the chill of it. The man who climbs the goal-post to bind the leek to the tip of it makes his heroic gesture, while the constable rebukes him cheerfully from below. A few are like Fluellen's 'Welshmen of goot service, wearing leeks in their Monmouth caps'. But they bring no sauce with the herb. Whoever may win at Twickenham, decorum never loses.

How to some probing psycho-analyst who muttered 'Rugger' in one's ear would one react? In thoughts of beauty, perhaps, and visions of a three-quarter line ribboning across



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the field on a radiant afternoon. There would be memories of the wondrous Poulton, the fleet and flaxen, 'with station like the herald Mercury', the incarnation of side-springing elusiveness and yet so selfless in his passion for the game that every three-quarter line he joined had 'a combination and a form indeed'. Other visions would bring to life some pack of mighty forwards struggling in vain with beaten backs behind them and ever towering up in their rushes like the imperious surge, yet, like the surge, eternally defied by some jutting fragment of defence. Ethics must condemn some practice of the Dominion teams, but aesthetics must rejoice in their ecstasy of speed. 'Bolts from the sun-god's quiver,' said Meredith of the swallows. I shall steal his phrase to honour those swifts.

## V. The Pains of Pleasure

A FRIEND has sent to me some correspondence between himself and the manager of a central London theatre. The playgoer charged the management with exploiting the success of their piece by turning sections of the pit into stalls and charging fourteen shillings and sixpence for an inferior seat, whose just price would seem to be about a quarter of that sum. The management could and did reply that there was no deceit; if purchasers bought seats which were marked in the box-office plan they could see how far back they were before buying them and stay away if they considered the price too high. It is obvious that the exploitation of a success in this manner may prove bad business in the long run. It prejudices the public against that particular house and against theatres in general, and adds to the number of those who think that play-going in central London is wretchedly uncomfortable and abominably expensive. Some of this number depart to the kinema, saying that it provides far greater comfort at far less expense. But these, too, are apt to be deceived. By a curious but significant coincidence I came across, along with the complaint of the playgoer, a serious accusation against a central

## The Pains of Pleasure

London kinema. There, although the seats and standing-room were already packed, the box-office was still taking money as though seats were available. When the purchaser discovered that he could have no seat and asked for his money back, it was only after great fuss and argument that he could get it. So the kinema is no better refuge for the Englishman who is determined to get comfort for his money.

The disappointed playgoer complained that he could neither see nor hear properly in the seat for which he had paid fourteen shillings and sixpence. The management retorted that he must have been able to see and hear because there were no complaints from the people around and behind him. This astonishing argument touches the root of the matter. The Englishman in search of diversion is surely the meekest man alive. He takes for granted that the search for pleasure will involve pains only tolerable by those whose tradition of patience is one of the wonders of the world. He believes that it is bad form to make a complaint, though he is ready to mutter in private. The result is that purveyors of entertainment simply trade on his equanimity. The London theatres are mostly models of discomfort and inconvenience: the managerial mind assumes that they are excellent, or at least adequate, because there is no general revolt.

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There will be no reform until there is common and vigorous action on the part of the consumer, and concerted action by consumers is extremely rare. Furthermore, the Englishman in search of entertainment has now become so accustomed to high prices and bad service that he accepts scandals as necessities. One would imagine that no holiday is complete for him unless he is simultaneously rooked and racked. Let those who have attended any popular athletic event and endeavoured to get a meal on the ground remember what they have suffered in squalor and extortion. For those who attend race-meetings and are not prepared to pay twenty-two shillings and sixpence for admission, the accommodation is wretched, and the facilities for refreshment in the six-shilling enclosure are sordid beyond description. The managements do nothing because nothing is demanded. The racegoer is willing to fight for stale beer in a filthy glass or for acrid tea in a cup that appears to have been rescued from an ash-heap. At cricket-grounds, when there is a big occasion, refreshment is almost out of the question. But for the crowd it is a 'day out', and the Englishman can now hardly believe that he is on holiday unless he is in a queue or travelling twenty in a carriage or battling for an antique bun in a shanty which the Ministry of Agriculture would schedule as unfit for cattle.

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Another case in point is the passion for self-torture and ordeal by boredom on Boat Race Day. Presumably those who struggle for a glimpse are not bored and coax themselves into some confidence of being in a sportsman's paradise. But to me the fascination exercised by the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race upon people who have otherwise no interest in Oxford or Cambridge or rowing is an abiding marvel. As the appointed season comes round small boys in remote preparatory schools become pugnacious champions of one colour or another and are prepared, like the heroes of Greek tragedy in the official regulations, to 'do and suffer terrible things'. Errand boys become dogmatic theorists of oarsmanship at considerable risk to the delivery of milk and meat. Not urchins only but countless thousands of grown men and women will jostle for position on the banks of the Thames and brave unspeakable severities of wind and weather for many hours to catch a momentary glimpse of the boats on their long and winding journey. Having received a minute of spectacle as the reward of some hours of chilly expectation, they will remain for hearsay about the winner to drift down the stream and then wander off to buy newspapers and learn with comparative comfort and certainty who won and why and how. The occasion is curious from all points of view. When the two universities are matched in a sport whose

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intricacies are understood by large numbers, such as cricket or football, the interest remains limited. The Association football match, for instance, attracts no general excitement at all, although the game is the most widely understood of any. But when there is a contest of oarsmanship, about whose technical niceties the mass of the people are as innocent as they are of the higher reaches of trigonometry, the affair suddenly becomes immensely popular and a national institution. Stranger still is the reflection that a game of football or cricket can be watched from start to finish, studied in detail and in the round, and enjoyed with some approach to comfort. But the Boat Race cannot be watched at all except by the small number following on launches. The crowd collects to get a glimpse of a particle of the race, and it is the distinguishing feature of one of the great sights of an English year that hardly anybody can see it.

The scramble for position, no doubt, has much to do with the popularity of the occasion. The idea that the English take their pleasures sadly is nonsense ; but that they take them in happy discomfort is profoundly true. What other nation would tolerate the queue system outside theatres ? Other peoples either refuse it or lose their tempers under its voluntary discipline and become ferocious anarchists. But English anarchy is merry enough because

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it is fundamentally good-tempered and considerate. You may shove, but you do not shove so hard as to put your neighbour in the river. Boat Race Day, like Derby Day, is free to all; the pay-box and the turnstile do not block the way. The adventurous can clamber on trees and roofs and chimney-tops or launch themselves on planks and pontoons in the creeks of the river. For the casual wanderer the true spectacle is the spectators, those queer human outcrops on timber and tile and the dark lichen of mankind which finds a sudden hold on boatyard walls and stains the fair serenity of Chiswick Mall. From Putney to Mortlake, as on Epsom Downs, the multitude turns out to see the multitude as much as to see men and horses. The air is fresh, the sight is free, the ripple is on the water, and tradition commands. That logic is confounded by such a gathering collected to watch the unwatchable is not a consideration which governs the Englishman on holiday or spree. It is a match of strength and skill in which he can back his fancy by no more expensive a gesture than the purchase of blue ribbon. So he goes and his family goes too, and if they do not see the race they can at least see other people not seeing it.

To stand in queues has now become second nature to our people, and it seems that no festivity is considered complete without some hours of this shiversome form of vigil. At



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Blackpool, in the summer, our northern revelers may be seen passing eagerly from one prolonged stance to another : they queue up for railway tickets, bathing-cabins, seats in kinemas, even for their food and drink. Sometimes this lust for loitering takes definitely maniac forms, and the fanatics of pleasure will wait twenty-four hours in order to scramble into a theatrical first-night or a big sporting spectacle. Now it is not my policy to interfere with the tastes and whims of individuals, and people who find their delight in the aches and cramps of the queue are welcome to their draughty heaven. But the man who wants his amusements combined with a modicum of comfort is put in a worse position by this curious itch for self-torture which drives the majority to its orgies of standing and squeezing and scrummaging. For he who suggests that a seat should be booked in advance and comfortable when obtained is now regarded as a fussy crank by the providers of entertainment, who meet any protest with a curt retort that, if the others do not grumble, everything must be perfect. The zanies of the queue and the tolerators of squalid conditions in their outings are not merely wearing out their own legs and swallowing dish-water from dirty cups : they are queering the pitch for those who have some honourable fastidiousness still left to them.

Accordingly I salute the man who complains. It is not pleasant to make a fuss, and usually



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revolt brings small reform. But to break away from the insufferable patience of the mob is to be, in some measure, a public benefactor. To challenge the common conception of a holiday or a night out as a lawful occasion for being put on the rack and robbed into the bargain is to assert a standard where a standard ought to be maintained. The average Englishman is so terrified of being thought fussy that his Saturday jaunts are turned into a routine of acceptance and of sheepishness. When somebody leaves the flock and becomes an articulate and indignant human being he deserves the thanks of his fellows and the redress of his grievance. But how often does he get either ?



## LETTERS TO SADIE

### I. Unseen America      ∩      ∩      ∩

DEAR SADIE—The English do not visit America in large numbers. They have, as substitutes for travel, the kinemas and the *Saturday Evening Post*. American magazines begin to appear more and more upon English bookstalls, and we are becoming familiar, on a wide scale, with those clean-limbed young men of Nordic aspect who starve, make good, marry little goldilocks, and direct a mammoth railroad within the limits of 15,000 words. Then we have the travellers' tales, and some travellers come back from America with brave notions, but we are well aware that the traveller says farewell to truth when he says farewell to his friends.

Our high-brows go a little farther inland. Quite a number have taken a stroll with Mr. Lewis through Main Street and others have even got as far as the sinister elm-trees which Mr. Eugene O'Neill plants in New England. A minority is escorted to the college campus where Miss Susan Glaspell hangs up her harp and weeps. Some of us enjoy seeing the storm cone hoisted at Baltimore, whence Mr. Mencken

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endeavours to strike a whole continent with his own unaided lightning. But these pleasures are for the passionate few. For the man in the street the U. S. A. means prohibition, Los Angeles, saxophones, Mr. Henry Ford, jazz, 'crook' plays, Babbit, Sophie Tucker, Mr. Ziegfeld and rows about wheat ramps, cotton ramps and rubber ramps. Why should he visit America ?

There is an added reason for staying at home. It is all very well for our actors to crowd the New York stage, since, by making the passage, they quadruple their salaries while they only double their cost of living. In some cases we English are very glad that you Americans like them so much. But what about the ordinary English fellow who is neither an actor nor an Arlen, nor a man with a load of lectures, nor a promoter of rubber companies ? He has got it fixed in his head that he cannot exist over there under fifteen dollars a day.

Fifteen dollars is three pounds ; three pounds a day is more than a thousand pounds a year. A thousand pounds a year is a considerable middle-class income for an Englishman. When he has paid his income tax he will have about eight hundred and fifty pounds left, and then he will have to start paying off his other taxes. His rates or local taxes alone will be half the annual cost of his living-place. How, on top of all this, can he pay for his journey, keep things

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going at home, and then spend three pounds a day in having a taste of New York ? America in short, is his never-never land. He just has to sit in his office and visualize.

Accordingly, while we hail Columbia only in our dreams, we take our holidays in France, and help to maintain that prudent nation by paying a few pennyworth of *taxe de séjour* in the morning and by enriching the casinos to the extent of a shilling or two at night. These are humble pleasures, but easier to manage than the payment of thirty shillings for a bed and bath. But we have sufficient curiosity to want to know about America. As I said before, we have as the materials of this education the movies, Main Street and, for the chosen few, Mr. Mencken. These visions do not predispose the average man to put all his sixpences in a stocking and wait, and wait, and wait until he can one day make the great adventure and look an American hotel bill in the face. So the Englishman continues to regard a week-end in Dieppe or Paris as his share of foreign travel. America remains the Great Unseen.

But something happens—something that disturbs our placid willingness to sit fast. The American comes to us. Why should he not ? A thousand pounds a year is not of great consequence to him, and if he does not like London he can go to a dozen other capitals. He crosses the Atlantic to discover a batch of new civilizations,

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whereas we would do so to find only one. The intellectual, as well as the monetary, exchange is thus in his favour, and, anyway, most Americans appear to be of the travelling sort. They live to move about and see things, even though their effort carries them into prehistoric hotels, in which to order a bath involves something of a seismic upheaval.

And then we discover that the real American is not inevitably the replica of that composite image, the hundred-per-cent-American-He-Man, which we had so carefully formed by studying films, the stories, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Nor is he like the cow-town mayors whom Mr. Mencken has made to appear so dreadfully real. In fact, he bears no conceivable resemblance to either of these fearsome apparitions.

He turns out to be human and humorous and rather modest. Moreover, he is excessively generous. America, politically considered as a corporate personality, seems to us a ferocious debt-collector that has just been making itself a trifle ridiculous in this matter of obligations. America, so America's less-friendly critics say, invented the League of Nations and then ran away from it in order more successfully to grind the faces of the poor. But the American when he steps off the boat at Southampton or Liverpool does not immediately search our pockets. The moment he has got on to the ship

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on his side he has started sending flowers by wireless to any English home whose address he happens to remember. Once over here he buys more flowers for the ladies and cigars for the gentlemen, and of course they are the best flowers and the best cigars. But he does not radiate hospitality with the mechanical condescension of a rich uncle ; he does it with the charm of a sincere and tactful friend.

Every now and then you send us the man for whom the comic writers and artists are praying. He is the hundred-per-cent-He-Bore who roams hotel lounges seeking whom he may inform. He probably has a message ; he is the prophet of a new diet or of salvation by putting soul into salesmanship. But he hardly comes up to the form of the monstrous clowns whose profundities are periodically reproduced in the *American Mercury*, and most Englishmen are still waiting to meet these corn-belt notables who point the path to heaven in terms of boost and Bible study.

Puritanism, Comstockery, the forward-lookers and the viewers-with-alarm have apparently got your country in their grip. But in New York, so rumour has it, the boldness of nocturnal *divertissement* outruns the audacities of Paris. The buyer who has come up from the Hinterland must get his drink on the sly, but he can have an Arabian night of more radiantly Oriental quality than Europe can offer ; he has merely to pay publicly, if heavily, at the door.

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Again, your attitude to the Jews seems odd to us when it is compared with the professions of your Constitution. In England anti-Semitism is only the cult of a small literary clique, but in New York one gathers that it is a regular part of the social conventions. Yet Jews seem to be doing all manner of important things in your country, especially with regard to the arts. None the less they are kept outside the pale in some at least of your social camps. Again we do not quite understand it.

The obvious course is for us to come and see you, but the Department of Inland Revenue—in other words, the tax-gatherer—stands like the angel with the fiery sword, and so we must go on reading Mr. Lewis and Mr. Mencken and looking at the pretty pictures you send us of the ladies employed in the Ziegfeld Follies.

And that is a pity.

Mr. Mencken says of his compilation that 'it drips with the juices of Kiwanis, the American Legion, the Ku Klux, Rotary, the Mystic Shrine, the Elks, the Sons of the Revolution, and the Y.M.C.A. It is genuine home-brew.' But the home-brew is not put into barrels and sent for us to taste. The hundred-per-cent-He-Bore is not, after all, a frequent migrant, and a lot of his breed must stay at home just to annoy Mr. Mencken. And, in return, we send you lecturers on the English novel; it is perhaps a just exchange.



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On the whole, you appear to retain your worst and to send us your best, and that is what mystifies the stay-at-home Englishman. He cannot get the measure of this great American contradiction ; he does not like your works but he does like your company, and in whichever direction he may happen to turn he finds the same confusion.

In your country social interferences with the business of the individual has been carried to the most extreme lengths. Outside of Maryland you do not agree that to tell a man what he must drink, or think, or smoke is an insult to his manhood. But we rarely find this intolerance in the individual. The Americans we meet are liberal-minded men who hate the whole silly business.

## II. Caste Across the Seas

DEAR SADIE—I have just been reading in an English newspaper that the cadets who are to become officers in the American Army are set to playing golf in their leisure on the ground that officers must be gentlemen and that the word ‘gentleman’ is synonymous with golfer. Those, it seems, who are to win respect upon parade and be followed obediently to the death, should duty call them to the defence of civilization in Nicaragua or other scenes of riot and unrest, must win the reverent loyalty of their troops by a nice display of the Country Club Manner. A man of blood and iron used to suffice for the tented field; now there are specifications. The blood must be reasonably blue, the iron such as is approved for long approaches by a Hagen or a Jones. This confusion of the good officer and the perfect gentleman may be all very well in an effete aristocracy like England. But how exactly does it fit in with what Mr. George Jean Nathan calls ‘The Land of Pilgrim’s Pride’ and with the stern republican ideals of the seventeenth-eighties?

Reading further I discover that the manufacture of gentle-folk appears to be a thriving American industry. This, for instance, is what

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I learn from the Washington correspondent of a London daily paper :

To be anybody in American 'society' it is necessary to be included in a 'social register'. There are higher degrees of rank, such as membership of the Colonial Dames of America or of the very exclusive Monday Evening Opera Club, but those whose names are not on a register are beyond the pale.

To scramble within the pale must involve some mountaineering of a strenuous kind, and the expenses of such athleticism can be considerable. The historian Gibbon once remarked that corruption is the infallible sign of constitutional liberty, and entry to the charmed circle of registered climbers is, I understand, a constitutional liberty open to all Americans who can—well, climb.

Far be it from an English observer to mock the American eagerness to abandon the fusty equalitarian notions of the eighteenth century and to institute and install a practical system of caste as householders install the latest improvements. My own impression of English life is that the social ruts of a caste system make for easy travelling. After all, a car moving along a rut-marked road does not jolt you unless you endeavour to get from one kind of a rut to another. I am well aware that ruts which keep young people from getting on in their careers are indefensible and that the career open to

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talent is a traditional democratic ideal. But I also observe a certain utility in ruts which prevent young couples from over-spending their incomes or making fools of themselves in social display. In a caste society like England there are extremely useful conventions about the state of life which a man is expected to maintain. If he is an ordinary professional worker and lives in an ordinary professional suburb his neighbours will not think more of him if he buys a six-cylinder car on a four-cylinder income, or is ashamed to give a guest beer with his lunch and wastes his money on indifferent wine. To know what you want is one aid to happiness ; even more important, however, is to know what is wanted of you.

One of the paradoxes of history is that equalitarian theory nearly always leads directly to inequality in practice. If Jack is said to be as good as his master he may be silly enough to show that his bank-account is as good too ; hence, when Jill asks the neighbours into the Jack-and-Jill house or apartment for an evening's party her first notion may be to outdo her friends in generosity of material entertainment and to prove that they can buy more food and drink than a whole regiment would ever consume. If, on the other hand, Jack and Jill are prepared to accept the common standard of their district and their caste and ask in company for company's sake and not as part of a regional

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competition in waste and ostentation, the general result is surely far happier. No social life can be peaceable or pleasant which has rivalry as its chief component; to have a caste system does not abolish such rivalries, but it makes this emulation less likely and less exacting. It means that housewives can entertain in a simple and unself-conscious manner and not feel that to give a modest meal is to let their husbands down in the social hierarchy. American women in England have told me that they particularly envied the Englishwoman her ability to entertain without fuss and in freedom from any atmosphere of neighbourly criticism and disdain. When you are not ashamed of your social label, there is no need for women to wear themselves to the bone in making a grand show.

Accordingly the expansion of 'Social Registers' will not be merely a poisonous process in American life. It will help to create some ruts which have their own utility. Indeed, the spread of 'caste' may paradoxically work to create a more genuine spirit of equality. It is when people are perfectly sure of their social status that they unbend most easily; should they be slowly and laboriously shifting themselves from one rut to another they are apt to be over-sensitive and uncomfortably jealous. Snobbishness is essentially the vice of an equalitarian society and became most strong in

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England with the growth of political democracy. In pre-democratic days when a gentleman was distinguished by wearing a sword he could mix with others without being misunderstood. His blade proclaimed him a buck. It was when the social grades established by the old class-distinctions broke down that people began to jostle and torture themselves and others in the fight for status. If you see one of Chekhov's plays about Russian country life in the eighteen-nineties you are introduced to a society in which caste is still strong while social equality has astonishingly free play. The lady of *The Cherry Orchard*, who belongs to the land-owners' class, has all the servants to her home-coming party and everybody can drink and dance together in the drawing-room. Can one imagine that happening in a democracy?

But note that when the lady has to leave her beloved cherry orchard through stress of poverty she forgets her antique butler and he is left locked up in the deserted house. He was only an inferior after all! That is the other side of the social medallion. Accordingly I am certainly not giving an unqualified blessing to the acceptance of caste. I merely point out that it has its conveniences to set against the cruelties and callousness of such a system. It seems as though human society has to put up with one kind of snobbery; either there will be rigidity of caste or there will be a snobbish

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rivalry amid the flux of wealth. A nation which prefers to risk the latter keeps the career open to talents and loses its sense of social ease ; the English nation has for long been used to a class-system which has done a great deal of harm by closing opportunities to the children of the poor and by distributing important jobs and chances to those whose only qualification was to have been at the right school or to be members of the right set or club. At the same time I have tried to show how the acceptance of the system has eased many strains which become intolerable where everybody is trying to make his own position by excelling in extravagance or display. Yet the English are at last beginning to move away from a caste-system to a rivalry of theoretical equals on the American model ; and what I read from time to time suggests that many Americans are tiring of that rivalry and seeking the peace afforded by social classes and Social Registers. Is there to be a great reorganization of the American world not on the basis of North or South or Republican or Democrat, but simply according to the possession of golf-clubs, or the lack of them, or some other social criterion like a place on the Social Register ? If that is so, Washington and New York will have surrendered to Bath, Bournemouth, and Cheltenham, and all those dreadful English towns where decayed gentlefolk await their end with angry protestations

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that the poor must be taught their place in a world where a colonel is still worth a salute. The conclusion is paradoxical, but not improbable.



### III. The Artful Dodger

DEAR SADIE—Every question of country implies a question of climate. Climate affects every phase of life ; it touches art through architecture, and clothes bespeak the meridian as well as the man. Food, of course, is conditioned by lines of latitude ; the map and the months together make the menu as they dictate to the dressmaker. An American visitor to London, busily engaged upon a grilled chop, has just told me that an American diet would be intolerable in England, while an English diet would be intolerable in America. He could not live without ice-water in his own country ; in England he felt no passion for the cooling stream. He looked across the restaurant into the street ; the opposite wall was grey and damp. ‘ You can’t look at that wall,’ he said, ‘ and want ice-water. But in New York the wall wouldn’t look like that.’ Let us misquote *Hamlet* and admit that there’s nothing good or bad but travelling makes it so. The tourist cannot afford fixed ideas ; he must suit his humour and his habits to the climatic tides which ebb and flow by the sun.

Accordingly the first thing to do in England is to take stock of the times and seasons and, particularly, to be careful about August. It is,

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unhappily, England's great month of foreign visitation ; it is also England's worst month for self-display. The song-birds are neither seen nor heard in this dull middle age of the year ; they hide in the bushes and moult until autumn bids them wing their way south or sing lustily in praise of the keener air that is to come. I do not suggest that many visitors come to England merely to hear the delicate fluting of nightingale and willow-wren or the sturdy soprano of the thrush, although it is true enough that these turn our May into a madrigal. My point is merely that the silent, sulking birds are giving us the hint. August is a morose and melancholy month. The sun may shine but the canvas of the country-side is not ready to receive it.

August is not really a month at all ; it is an interval. England is the country of fine shades in decoration ; ' the green and pleasant land ' of Blake's intemperately quoted line is one of those understatements which remain to mislead. England may be green in spring and green not with any disciplined monotony of hue, but with a riotous anarchy which includes all the scale and scope of green. Then the pageant of the tints begins and, when the season has ripened to September, England is a medallion struck of gold and copper and bronze. The weeks pass and vermillion is splashed upon the dying year of the woodlands. ' Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him ? '

# The Artful Dodger

All English poets have sung the coloured counties, few better than A. E. Housman, who knows that spring is not green only.

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland side,  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Those who would see Stratford aright, must see it in the April light when Arden is in its livery of blossom and wears all the glittering clouts which it will cast in a month or two. August, when most people go to Stratford, is the interval when the green has gone drab and the leaf has tired, but not turned. The corn-fields have yellowed, but the high virtues of variety are not yet. It is autumn which sweeps England to its climax of colour ; then the woods are pricked with scarlet and the quiet mists creep up at dusk to make every sunset a composition. The smoke goes comfortably from cottage roofs ; the trees are as rubicund as the tiles. The air, which was as flat and stale as tepid water two months ago, comes tingling off the dew-glistening lawns on which the leaves are fluttering in their dance of death. One breathes a bubbling distillation of the time, breathes and is hungry. The English dietary was surely planned for October days. The beef and bacon and beer, which seemed so gross

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and tyrannical in high summer, are now the servitors and not the oppressors of the appetite. Very well then. August is an English institution to be missed. Oh, to be in Deauville now that August's there ! Some use Browning so. Anyhow, there are the Alps if you are active, or the Lido if you love to lounge. Let England wait.

Let London and let Paris wait. If you cannot catch your capitals in the spring of the year, then delay them till the fall. The things to miss in London are the yellow fogs which are normally November's gift and the dull torpor of the ending summer. But in early autumn the mist wanders playfully from the river, and as you walk westward along the Embankment or Piccadilly in the late afternoon you will have sunsets that are pink and pearly and mantle the town in gentle gaiety. I hate a town at a time when you cannot see the shops lighted up and when people, leaving their work by daylight, go scurrying off to suburban tennis-lawns. The legitimate hours of a capital are five to seven on an October evening, when the day still flushes the west but the pleasures of night are promised. The street-lamps come dancing into line and everything has a glitter. The crowds are fresh and eager ; expectation is abroad. The restaurants have a beckoning savour ; the bills and pictures outside the theatres are no longer wearisome. The alluring liveliness of

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the town has touched them. The splenetic jostling of the street in summer has passed ; autumn in town is the time for making friends. Or turn eastward and, as you make for the Cheshire Cheese—if you care for hard-worked antiquity and sanded floors—you will see far better on a September evening than on any night of August or July that John Davidson was a man with an eye.

Afloat, upon ethereal tides,  
St. Paul's above the city rides.

He knew.

But, supposing that you are faced willy-nilly with August in England, what then ? Work and steamships wait for no man, and you must use your time. There is, naturally, the road to the north, and the iron road is a good one. Up by the east route, seeing York Minster and Durham Cathedral as the sacred sentinels of the track, and back by the west over the Cumbrian moorlands. A Scottish express train on either track is not a thing to be missed. But in Scotland there are supposedly typical things which are well worth avoiding. There are those Highland games, august occasions for which the lairds get out their kilts and the Press-men their cameras. Countesses attend in tweeds and brogues to see professional athletes from the cities parade their muscularities, and

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professional pipers come out from the barracks to masquerade as village bards before the Rolls-Royce public whose glittering monsters are parked in the glen. Here is Scotland, if you like ; but it is Scotland turned self-conscious, Scotland flaunting a fussy, ephemeral nationalism in the well-rouged face of cosmopolis. The traveller for whom I write has sense enough to be bored by cosmopolis, even though it goes kilted to the cocktail bar of the expensive hotel. Accordingly, if you want to find the essential Scotland, do not look for it in the picture-papers where ' Lady McWhustle and friend ' sorrily betray the fact that tartan is only fancy dress. In the fashionable journals you see much of North Berwick and Braemar, good enough spots for the sportively inclined, but better before the social temperature rises too high or after it has slipped back to normal. Leave the highway and thread the hills, wander into the little fishing-towns of the east, see golf-links and gown and grey academy at St. Andrews, and, if you have time, go west to the Hebrides. The Celtic mists, it is really true, do rise quite often from the lonely creeks and unveil an elfin gaiety of desolation. Not only amid the Isles of Greece is the sea a wine-dark beauty. Nature can play the peacock round the Isle of Skye. Thus straying in lands where a man's sheep are his fortune you can get the taste of miserable ' resorts ' out of your mouth ;

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you can also learn on fine days why the natives love Scotland and—on wet ones—why they leave it.

But suppose you are still in England with August on your hands. Some one is certain to recommend Cornwall. The county has been cleverly boomed and is admirably served by the railway company that leads you there ; it has colonies of artists and, not long ago, it was the scene of innumerable novels. Mr. Hugh Walpole had a Cornish complex ; Mr. Compton Mackenzie applied his decorative prose to the sinister cliffs and still more sinister psychology of the Cornish peasant. Mr. Charles Marriott was continually on the road to Land's End. Let us grant that its place-names run like a Druid's incantation, that it is a finely chiselled coast, and that the Atlantic comes foaming nobly against this 'jutting frieze' of England. But much of the inland with its flat, treeless wastes, its worked-out tin-mines, its gardenless cottages, is bleak without being good. No roaring of literary lions will persuade me to love the gaunt, flat miles that run out to the Lizard.

As the alternative to Cornwall, I suggest Yorkshire, the most inclusive of English shores. Its eastern fishing-towns climb the steep bank of land in mottled anarchy of tile and stone ; its cliffs are as noble as Cornwall's, and the moors behind them are far finer in scope and



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line. South-east are the forgotten Yorkshire wolds, where the marks of the Danish invasions have survived a thousand years, and the sweet hills that run down to Beverley's fane. West of this is the great green plain over which York Minster looms like a giant on guard. From York you can slip out to Coxwold where Laurence Sterne preached on Sundays and wrote *Tristram Shandy* through the week ; and at Coxwold you will find the English village in its grey and tranquil perfection. West again are the Pennine moors whose delectable dales run down into the menacing industrial towns. The Pennines are less than the Scottish Highlands in bulk and height, but they have their own grandeur. Leeds and Bradford and the smoking cities are, by convention, places to miss. But I am not so sure. They contain the history of the nineteenth century written in very black ink. They are certainly not places in which to stop and bask ; but the American who wants to understand the making of modern England should see the dark, satanic mills of Blake's despair as well as the agreeable verdure of his hope. York is a missal left over from the middle ages ; Leeds a commercial document scribbled before trade had begun to acknowledge civic obligations and after it had lost its taste and its tradition of neighbourly good manners. After and before Leeds and Bradford it would be well to miss many conventional spectacles



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in order not to miss Gloucestershire and what Belloc has called :

The hundred little towns of stone  
Forgotten in the western wolds.

They are the commercial ancestors of Leeds and Bradford and the dark West Yorkshire towns. They were built by the masters of the wool trade before the wool trade moved north to the coal-fields. They were built, too, when money was plentiful in the district and English building was at its best. They are seventeenth-century towns with polite manor-houses and great broad marketing streets in which every house has a comfortable prosperity and a friendly unsuspecting air. You will see as much of English history in Burford or Chipping Camden or Painswick as you will in Stratford-on-Avon. The old staple industry has passed them by and they never knew the gaunt cruelty of the industrial revolution. They sleep in beauty. Beautiful, too, are their surroundings of wold and woodland, but landscape is not the chief objective of the American in England. He has in his own country every possible condition of climate and contour ; he is the citizen of a continent which caters for every taste. He comes to escape the continent and to find the parish, and to walk backward up the slope of history. Here are secret steps for his journey, cut in the noblest stone.

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Can one decently miss Oxford and Cambridge ? Hardly, but one can miss them in vacation, and the summer vacation lasts from the end of June to the beginning of October. I do not agree with Lamb that it is nice to go unmolested and to have the privacy of a university town. As a matter of fact, in these days you will not go unmolested in high summer through Addison's Walk or in Trinity Court. Both cities are given over in vacation to the intensive cultivation of elders who gather for summer schools and discuss everything from diet to divinity. So that, with the tourists and the talkers, there is no academic desert in which you can imagine yourself, Lamblike, a master of arts in sole sovereignty over cloistral solitudes. The time to miss a university is when it is doing its secondary tasks ; the time to see it is when the streets are busy with young and native bustle and when the visitor can observe the genuine inhabitant in his full activity of wasting time. The proper inmates of the very old buildings are the very young people. Accordingly the time not to be missed is when gowns are mingled with golf-clubs in the street and there is the fret and fever of terrific enjoyment. The time to see ' the finest street in Europe ' (if it ever was or still is) occurs when it is also the happiest street. That is on a brisk morning of early winter when the freshman, free at last from the restraints of school and home, is feeling himself a new-born

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‘ man of the world ’ and is sniffing the air with a lofty sense of ownership and opportunity. There are all the pleasures of health and vigour before him ; he strolls back from a lecture, a monarch in his teens. The ancient walls look down upon young liberty year after year, on its bliss and its blunders, its friendships and triumphs and disillusion. Oxford and Cambridge are not only aggregations of architecture and lawns where tread the sober and the sage. They are the brief but paradisal lodgments of immaturity and they are to be seen when the stir of youth is about their dry bones and the quadrangles catch folly as it flies. Miss them in vacation as you will miss a theatre when the curtain is down for the season, dust-sheets are on the stalls, and the mice are playing in the dressing-rooms where the happy or the tortured player has torn off the uniform of victory or the bitter trappings of defeat.

There are many things which ought to be missed and which are hard to miss. There is the hotel-keeper who works by routine and never thinks about what the occasion and the individual are likely to demand. But how to escape him ? Find a friend of judgment and get him to give you a black-list if he can. If that is impossible, remember that in England the size of the hotel is no guarantee of anything but size. Inquire after country inns that have a repute rather than post on to the more

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grandiose institutions which carry three or four stars in the motoring handbooks. Most Americans in England find great difficulty in missing cabbage. They have my complete sympathy. This disgusting food has no justification for existence, but, being cheap, and easily grown on any patch of ground, it has become a tyrannical habit with the careless caterer. The English custom is to serve it in a sodden condition with some sodden boiled potatoes. The really bad hotel serves cabbage and potatoes in this soaked and savourless state twice daily, and its manager regards you as an incipient maniac if you resent his ghastly notions of a vegetable. There ought to be a roll of repute drawn up for all hotels and restaurants which never admit cabbage and never serve boiled potatoes after the summer. But, until a great popular revolt against cabbage has been instigated, I cannot offer much hope to the visitor that he will be able to miss this abomination. In the spring the kind of caterer who serves cabbage follows it up with rhubarb as a sweet. Miss this, though it should involve a state of semi-starvation. One of the greatest malefactors of all time was he who first thought of eating the vile fibre of the rhubarb stalk. Medicinal it may be, but missed it must be by all who have a civilized palate. The American who wants to do England a service should lead a riot when the cabbage and rhubarb appear.

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Tremble, too, at the words ' ye olde ' and shun the half-timbered house on which it is written. For that timber may be only modernity's planks plastered upon some Victorian stone or jerry-builder's composition. If you want to see genuine timbering go to Cheshire—there is little worth missing in that county—but where the mock Cheshire is on view, in southern shires with bogus antique lettering, turn in flight swiftly and surely. There has been a growing pest of sham antique in England and the Tudor tea-shop is a plague that spreads. Bear in mind that where the architecture is a fraud the food will be likewise. Be suspicious of the ' arty ' sign—it has crept lately even into the loveliest nooks of the Cotswolds—and of the curio shop which admits ' ye ' to its vocabulary. Finally, the best English friend for the American traveller is the man who knows where to leave the high street for the low. For England is a land of secret pleasures ; it likes high walls and closed doors and does not always spread its good sights and good company abroad. Thus the happy tourist is he who has friendly, introductions to corridors and crannies and unpretentious company. When the familiar antiquities and resorts are bidding for his profitable patronage, let him remember that a chance acquaintance with a communicative friend may reveal the hidden treasure in unsuspected quarters. Thus may the lucky man

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even escape boiled cabbage. But I offer no hope of that. Even the most knowledgable natives have failed on that adventure. Still there are many splendours to be won by the wanderer who has the courage and the craft to miss the obvious. As a preparatory course for an English visit learn to be suspicious. A true miss is as good as many miles of routine visitation and almost any little neglected country town is a palimpsest in brick and stone for those who have an eye. Escapes are as valuable as encounters and the true traveller in these days of push and publicity is also an artful dodger.

#### IV. John Bull's Frisky Season



DEAR SADIE—August is England's holiday month. Our schools do not enjoy an immense summer vacation, enabling the more prosperous braves and squaws to cross a continent or two with a papoose strapped on the luggage. Having only six or seven weeks to spare, the English family of the middle class engages rooms at a seaside resort which can be reached in a train journey of three hours and at a cost of some five dollars per head. All the same sort of people suddenly deposit themselves in the same sort of week in the same sort of place. These August assemblies are all very jolly and accustomed and reassuring. Anyway, there is no fuss with passports, visas, currencies and barbarous tongues. Shrimpton becomes home-town. Everybody just plays tennis and golf all day instead of playing only in the evenings and week-ends. When the families bundle themselves back in September they all meet at the suburban tennis club and say they've had a really wonderful change.

That talk of change may be a piece of social usage that the moralist can sniffily dismiss as humbug. But no amount of superior persons will be able to show that the complete migration of Surbiton to Shrimpton or of Oldham to

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Blackpool has not been a complete success. The thing is proved by the fact that the same families go to the same sea-beach, play the same ball games and listen to the same troupes of pierrots for years on end. No body of people can be happy for long if it lacks a code and a tradition. The English bourgeoisie are intensely happy people and not least because they have got their frisky season as disciplined and detailed and codified as a railway time-table.

There on the Shrimpton shore stands the Esplanade Hotel, in which the father on holiday can rely on having his dinner served just as badly as his own cook could manage it. Peep into the lounge of the 'Esplanade' one evening and you are compelled, in adoration of that blissful scene, to utter the title of the play, 'They Knew What They Wanted'. There they all are; wearing just as much evening dress as will satisfy their sense of security without bordering on the starchy or the vulgarly splendid. There is the bridge table, the old lady with her sewing and the young girl by the radio set, the illustrated papers and the hint of whisky soon to emerge. No wonder that the hotel-keeper boldly advertises 'a home from home'. He knows the basic truth of all English life—namely, that familiarity breeds the fun that is called rare.

There stands on the dining-tables a menu card, which has been supplied gratis to advertise



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a mineral water. Should you inadvertently invade the 'Esplanade' refectory before the gong has called you to its ritual you may discover a melancholy waiter (who at other seasons is the oppressive servitor of young Oxford or Cambridge), using that card as a toothpick. Why blame him? Since English refinement rejects the salutary toothpick as an object of public use and display, it merely drives the healthy-habited person to effect the necessary clearances with improvised weapons. There are bus tickets; there are menu cards. There seems, indeed, to be little other justification for the menu card at the Esplanade Hotel. The 'Esplanade' public knows exactly what it wants and gets it. If the diet sheet were ever altered, they would immediately leave and seek an establishment which had a proper reverence for the rules.

Shall we follow the happy 'Esplanaders' through their gravy-soup, synthetic codfish, roast beef of Old Argentine, sodden potatoes and cabbage that is coming up for the third time in a sea of green waters? Shall we proceed to the stewed fruit, the blancmange, the Manitoban Cheddar cheese, the chill and swarthy coffee? We shall not. We shall merely note the jaws in action below a score of masks that register intense satisfaction in the calm, confident Anglo-Saxon manner. We shall reflect that these diners knew what they wanted. Their ambition runs as little to local

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produce, the creams and curds and crackling bacon of pastoral England, as it runs to the kickshaws and composts of the alien world.

I merely record ; I do not mock. Bliss is a serious matter and it is the proper business of mankind to achieve it. But students of the social scene, while they approve the English achievement in simply picking up their entire domestic ritual and dumping it intact each August upon some sea-coast village, must admit the superior energy and audacity of the American who first of all crosses 3,000 miles of watery desert and has no sooner glimpsed London than he talks of slipping over to Budapest with as little sense of an adventure as stirs the Londoner when he books a ticket to Brighton. For my own part, I stand by my own people. My own idea of Europe is to stop at Boulogne. In refusing locomotory holidays, the Angles are on the side of the angels. But when I see those who differ from this restful view put their theory into furious practice I am fully capable of wonder. I hereby salute the pilgrim fathers, mothers, and children who are now preparing to sit up all night in a stifling second-class carriage in the company of the itinerant Latins, whose secretions of saliva so far outrun their capacity to retain it. I do not take my hat off to France, but most certainly I raise it to those who entrust their lives to a French railway.

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I also bow to those who in questing after the glories of Old Spain are ready to establish intimate relations with the bedbug and other lasting enchantments of the Middle Ages.

And so these intrepids will go steaming home to Grand Rapids long after a September morn has seen the British suburbanites fold up their bathing tents and creep serenely back to Streatham. The old English milord used to manage, with much cracking of coach whips and wine bottles, the Grand Tour. But in this matter of mileage-eating we are degenerate folk, not sharing the American appetite for the Grand Hike. I have just been reading your Mr. Sinclair Lewis's novel, *Mantrap*, and I feel abased. What English lawyer would ever make so noble a fool of himself as Ralph Prescott in this book? What dapper little attorney from Bedford Row would assault a continent to cure a headache? Which of our city men would regard the Ghost Squaw River as all in the day's hike? Our sense of fluminal escapade is satisfied by paddling Madeleine home to Thames Ditton. We may occasionally think of the Big Outdoors, but we don't see it quite as big as all that.

So leave us to our Esplanade Hotel. We mean to be happy this August, and we don't miss our aim. We go on playing our golf in the same old careless way, and when your Mr. Hagen says we're too darned lazy to play well

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we know that he's darned well right ; also that, in another sense, he's darned well wrong, because we still intend to keep the driver as a joystick instead of making it a pedagogue's cane. I am well aware that, as civilized beings, we ought to be intolerant of all the sodden things we eat, and that is why I am rather shy of August at the Esplanade Hotel for my own particular vacation. But I am still more shy of the bedclothes in the Balkans. That is where one's Englishness finally bubbles out—at the railway ticket bureau in August. 'Two to Shrimpton.' He-men indeed ! And in the frisky season !

And at the same time little Miss Selina K. Sprott, of Seattle, will be inquiring of the stationmaster at Brnodpol whether she must change here to get a lift on the cattle train to Crzynsk, so she can get down the Vistula by coal barge and see that just wonderful cathedral at Pnopfosk—and what about a visa for Trans-Ruritania ?

Pioneers, oh, Pioneers ! Pilgrim spinsters, I salute you.

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